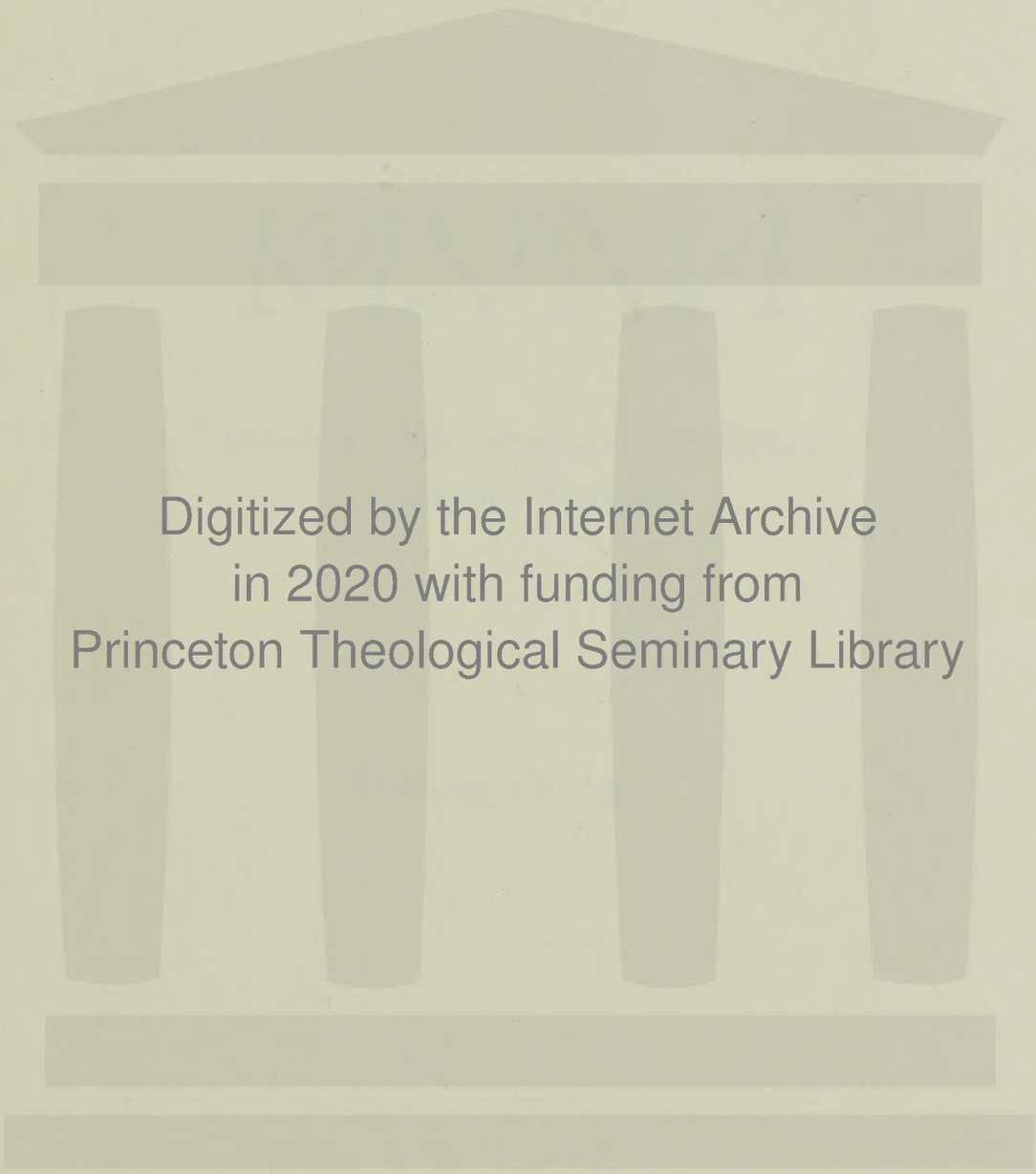

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EDITORIAL

With this ninth volume *Koinonia* continues its tradition of offering a platform for provocative scholarship that challenges the boundaries between disciplines and pushes forward into the exploration of new issues or fresh appraisals of old topics. Though *Koinonia* was founded by and continues to be published by doctoral students at Princeton Theological Seminary, the journal is drawing from a widening pool of submissions. The topics covered in this volume range from Barth and Schleiermacher to a proposal aimed at providing a philosophical foundation for reconciliation among Cubans. This volume also includes the texts from the 1997 *Koinonia* Fall Forum, which centered on the theme of theodicy. All of the texts included here, in one way or another, touch on theological responses to human pain.

Barth's early appraisal of Schleiermacher has set the tone for subsequent generations of theologians. Philip Ruge-Jones revisits Barth's early critique of Schleiermacher to ask both if Barth's assessment fairly represents Schleiermacher and if Barth's own preaching would withstand the same criticism. Good Friday sermons from both men provide the basis for comparing their christologies, which Ruge-Jones sees as divergent, but not as far apart as Barth supposed them to be. Contemporary preachers can look to both Barth's and Schleiermacher's approaches as they discern how to best proclaim God's word in any particular context.

I. Brent Driggers offers a fresh reading of Amos 5:21–24, a text often used by both Jews and Christians to denounce those who engage in religious rituals without showing concern for social justice. Driggers explores this passage in light of the larger theme of Israel's relationship to the land. The sheepherder turned prophet denounces Israel's cultic ritual because Israel, in exploiting the poor and marginalized, has not properly used the gifts provided by the land which Yahweh gave to them. The intent of the passage, according to Driggers, is not to replace cultic ritual with ethical instruction, but to remind Israel that the God who brought them into the promised land is also the God who administers justice and

righteousness, including judgment. Israel's failure to live justly and righteously leads to exile, the loss of the promised land.

In his essay Christopher S. D. Rogers takes up the task of exploring the relationship between Christian ethics and postmodernism. His close reading of John D. Caputo's *Against Ethics* points to the dangers lurking in the thorough-going deconstructionism of skeptical postmodernism. Yet Rogers also finds warnings which Christian ethicists should heed as they strive to guide human action.

Miguel A. De La Torre's search for a Christian philosophical foundation for praxis that will lead to reconciliation among Cubans leads him to explore the work of the Spaniards Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset. As a symbol for the multi-cultural heritage and identity of Cubans, those living in Cuba today and those living elsewhere, De La Torre points to *ajiaco*, a stew made from ingredients contributed by the different ethnic groups who intermingled on the island. Though De La Torre acknowledges that some meaningful concepts may be borrowed from Eurocentric knowledge, he argues that Cuban wisdom, specifically Cubans' encounter with God within Christ's suffering, must be the basis of the attempt to construct a reconciled Cuba.

The 1997 *Koinonia* Fall Forum, held at Princeton Theological Seminary on October 15, 1997, tackled the difficult question of theodicy. J. Richard Middleton led our discussion with his centerpiece essay entitled "Why the 'Greater Good' Isn't a Defense: Classical Theodicy in Light of the Biblical Genre of Lament." Those employing the strategy of the "greater good defense," from Augustine to contemporary philosophers such as Alvin Plantinga, John Hick, and Eleonore Stump, all argue that God, understood as all good and omnipotent, ultimately has a good reason for allowing the existence of evil in the world. Middleton argues that such a position does not allow for the existence of genuine evil, nor can belief in such a position be sustained in the face of horrors of the twentieth century, the Gulf War being the most recent example named by Middleton.

The testimony of Scripture, specifically the genre of lament, leads us in another direction. Job and the Psalmists, among others, confront God with their suffering, and indeed even dare to indict God as the source of the evil they experience. Yet in most instances of lament in the Hebrew Scriptures, there is a movement from grief and complaint to a new orientation which allows for the praise of God without denying the reality of

evil. Thus the Hebrew Scriptures offer what Middleton sees as an "alternative theodicy" to the classical theodicies which employ the "greater good defense."

Old Testament scholar Melody D. G. Knowles takes up Middleton's challenge to further explore the Psalms as appropriate responses to evil. In her paper she briefly summarizes scholarship on psalmic lament. She pushes beyond Middleton's appeal to the Psalms as paradigmatic for the processing of the experience of evil by people of faith to suggest that lament itself has causal power. The purpose of lament, according to Knowles, is the transformation of God, which will then lead to the transformation of the situation of the suffering individual or community through God's intervention.

In her response to Middleton, Mary Schaller Blaufuss suggests that the lived experience of evil should be the starting point for interfaith dialogue. She seeks to go beyond the dialogue with Jewish people already present in Middleton's text by encouraging Christians to engage peoples of other faiths as they seek to articulate a response to the suffering and evil present in the world. Just as suffering is not limited to Jews or Christians, so the discussion of the reality of evil should be broadened to bring other groups and their experiences to the table. Such dialogue, according to Blaufuss, has the potential of challenging the very understanding of God as all good and all powerful that undergirds classical western theodicies.

Clifford Blake Anderson wishes to probe the implications of moving, as Middleton suggests, from the conceptual world of classical theodicy to the conceptual world of the Bible. He notes that the position known as classical theodicy first emerges within the Greek and Roman philosophical tradition. This public discourse was then taken up by Christian theologians. Anderson asks how we can be sure that the omnipotent God posited by the philosophers is the same God invoked by biblical authors and contemporary communities of faith. He suggests that the task of theology is this process of translation between the different conceptual worlds of the Bible and philosophy, understood broadly as various fields of inquiry. This process of translation should work both ways, lest theologians allow the philosophers to define rationality.

Pastoral theologian Elisabeth Margarete Ziemer challenges the methodology of Middleton's work when she points out that in putting forth biblical lament, which allows for the processing of suffering, as an alter-

native form of theodicy, he has attempted to provide a functional answer to an existential problem. She examines various stage models that have been put forth for the management of suffering and crises. These models parallel the stages of lament identified by Middleton. Yet these stage models, like the pastoral solution Middleton offers for the lived experience of evil, do not address the question of the source of evil. By focusing on the progressive move present within lament, Ziemer claims that Middleton undermines his own theological argument.

Tomáš Hančil suggests that Middleton's attempts to dispose of rationality in favor of biblical lament leave him bereft of the possibility of offering a viable alternative to classical theodicy. Hančil begins by critiquing Middleton's portrayal of Augustinian theodicy. Augustine redefined evil as the lack of good and set his discussion of evil within the context of creation, which represents a positive good and is contingent on God's will. Hančil notes that Middleton collapses different classical theodicies into his presentation of "greater good" theodicy. Free will theodicy, argues Hančil, cannot be subsumed under the notion of the "greater good defense." Neither the "greater good defense" nor Middleton's attempt to construct on an alternative based on biblical lament takes human freedom seriously. By retaining the notion of an omnipotent God, Middleton, despite the profound pastoral insights of his work, fails to offer a viable theodicy.

Koinonia is a collective effort made possible by the dedication of the editorial board and the generosity of Princeton Theological Seminary. As is wont to happen with student-led enterprises, *Koinonia* has once again gone through a leadership transition. Former executive editor Wesley W. Smith deserves thanks for allowing me to preside over a Fall Forum which he and the board had planned. Special thanks goes to Tomáš Hančil, our production editor, for picking up the pieces and keeping things moving during the transition. As an editorial board we count it as an honor to be able to offer the work of graduate students to the broader academic community in this way. We hope that many others will choose to join us in this endeavor by submitting their work for our consideration.

— KARLA ANN KOLL
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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Barth's Early Cross Examination of Schleiermacher*

PHILIP RUGE-JONES

Over seven decades ago, Karl Barth presented his first substantial treatment of Schleiermacher. Those lectures set the tone for subsequent evaluation of Schleiermacher's theological project. Even though Barth himself revised his own perspective in later years, his early evaluation continues to direct contemporary appraisals of Schleiermacher. Out of his critique, a wall has been built between two distinct ways of doing theology. In this article we will look at the young Barth's lectures on Schleiermacher's preaching found in his book, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*. We will return to some of the specific sermons which the young Barth had assessed in order to ask if he was fair in his evaluation of the father of liberal theology. We will ask if the two options which the youthful Barth charts are as divergent in practice as we have come to believe. A living concern drives our inquiry: what are the real methodological options available for us today almost three quarters of a century after Barth gave these lectures?

We will start out by looking at Barth's expressed motive for dealing with Schleiermacher in 1923. Barth's own foreword to *The Theology of Schleiermacher* will provide the source for my interpretation. Then we will trace the overall critique that Barth offers of Schleiermacher's sermons. His study of the Sunday sermons of Schleiermacher's last years will serve us well in this respect. We will then spiral in a bit closer to the center and examine his general concerns in regards to the Good Friday sermons, pausing to listen carefully to his final statement of the problem. Then, we will

* The thoughts in this article began to take shope in a seminar offered at the University of Chicago under the wise and diligent presiding of Dr. B. A. Gerrish.

move into Barth's critique of one of Schleiermacher's Good Friday sermons, "Christ's Promise to the Thief on the Cross." This will aid us in judging the fairness of Barth's appraisal of the primary texts. Some general remarks will be made about how the questions raised by this comparison might affect our understanding of Barth's overall critique. Next, the tables will be turned for a moment as we look at a Good Friday sermon which Barth himself preached at the time that he was working on the Schleiermacher lectures. We will ask how Barth's own preaching stands up to his criticism of Schleiermacher's sermons. Finally, we will step back and ask what real differences exist in the approaches of these two preachers. Some concluding remarks will point to the assistance and challenge that they offer to each other and, in the end, to us as well.

TO SEE, KNOW AND LEARN TO UNDERSTAND HIM-WITH-YOU

Before we begin to examine Barth's treatment of Schleiermacher the preacher, we would do well to consider why Barth has engaged in this study. The foreword to the collection of his lectures makes clear that his interest is not finally in Schleiermacher as a historical person of the past. Though he believes that Schleiermacher was a theological virtuoso who did amazing things in his time, that is not finally what brings Barth to examine (or cross-examine) him. Certainly he does state, "It is to learn to know and to depict this theological genius of the 19th century that I want to study Schleiermacher with you" (1982, xv). Yet more to the point than purely historical interest is his urge to critique those who consider themselves Schleiermacher's legitimate heirs.

Barth was disillusioned with his own liberal teachers who had chosen to walk in the procession begun by Schleiermacher. Barth returns to Schleiermacher in order to understand the beat that was leading this march. Yet *ultimately* Barth's concern is not with those who consciously have declared their fidelity to Schleiermacher's procession; Barth's concern is that the rhythm of Schleiermacher's march moves all subsequent theologians in ways which are not even known to us. He writes:

> But Schleiermacher is not dead for us and his theological work has not been transcended. If anyone still speaks today in Protestant theology as though he were still among us, it is Schleiermacher. We *study*

> Paul and the reformers, but we *see* with the eyes of Schleiermacher and think along the same lines as he did. This is true even when we criticize or reject the most important of his theologoumena or even all of them (1982:xiii).

How emphatically Barth sees the presence of Schleiermacher in his day! Barth includes himself among those who are haunted by Schleiermacher's phantasm. Schleiermacher is not dead "for us" and his theological work is not surpassed for us. Even Barth who has stated an antithesis to Schleiermacher cannot escape his sway easily. The problem of Schleiermacher is a problem today. Even when we look to Scripture or the reformers, we still see with Schleiermacher's eyes. As Barth brings this home, you can almost hear him pounding on the podium (or, shall I say, pulpit): "Schleiermacher's method, Schleiermacher's presuppositions, today are–wittingly or unwittingly, willed or not willed–the characteristic ferment of almost all theological work!" (1982:xiii, translation altered to reflect the original German syntax). Indeed, few are those since Schleiermacher's time "who did not bow the knee to Baal" (1982:xv). The young Barth comes not as historical theologian, but as exorcist. For we are intellectually and volitionally in bondage to Schleiermacher and cannot free ourselves.

In light of the urgency of this reality, the method which Barth claims he will employ sounds incredibly reserved:

> ...for the aim of my lectures is not to make you hard on the universally venerated Schleiermacher but to see and know and learn to understand him with you, not to induce the arrogant view that you can become a match for him but to handle him modestly, not to condemn him but to comprehend him as he was and obviously had to be. (1982:xvi).

In this citation we again see Barth's concern for the contemporary significance of this study. If he and his students have Schleiermacher's eyes, he promises them that you can at least learn to see, know and understand "him-with-you". Barth pledges objectivity; he promises to present Schleiermacher as the virtuoso himself would have you know him. He vows to use "simple and placid observations and statements"–a promise which he manages to keep only in the very first section (1982:vxi).

CRITIQUE OF THE LATER SUNDAY SERMONS: AS WITH CHRIST, SO WITH US

When examining the first set of Sunday sermons, Barth insists that the dynamics present therein will continue throughout all of Schleiermacher's sermons. Barth objects that Schleiermacher's favorite refrain is the theme of peace. Peace is the true benefit of salvation which can be defined as the great synthesis of all antitheses. This peace has taken place through Christ in the form of his life, spirit and power and it has done so in history. This peace is a newness or freshness. It is the "only real relationship to God" which overcomes every legal separation between God and humanity (1982:47). Barth contrasts his own understanding of miracle wherein God and humanity stand in total contradiction to each other with that of Schleiermacher wherein Christ participates in a general reconciling power of peace. Barth wonders if the power of peace (*Friedensmacht*) referred to in Schleiermacher's sermons is of Christ or whether Christ only participates in what has already been operative among us.

Barth detects a repeating pattern in Schleiermacher's sermons: "As with Christ, so with us." More complexly stated, "Schleiermacher's complete doctrine of Christ's work" is: "Christ, a specific outlook [*Gesinnung*] as his legacy, the need to maintain and quicken this, it is his gift to humanity, and the final imperative, let us act with the same mind [*Gesinnung*]" (1982:55). Barth wonders why Christ is necessary to Schleiermacher at all once he knows the principle in which Christ participated. Yet, though Barth is puzzled here, he does concede that Schleiermacher holds onto that necessity for whatever reason.

Related to the theme of peace and unity is the issue of continuity. The gift that Christ gives seems to take on a life of its own within the community, independent of Christ; the gift is not only real in the moment of the giving, but becomes for the community a possession. Thus the second clause in "as with Christ, so with us" can mean "so it must be with us" or "so it is with us" or even "so it has been with us." Most rarely, according to Barth, this phrase would carry an eschatological sense of "so it will be." For Barth the claim that the peace of God has found a home in our community is highly problematic. Schleiermacher ignores the unavoidable, and always radical, divine strangeness that interjects itself in our relationship to God. Finally, for Schleiermacher no categorical distinction exists between Christ and humanity; the difference is only one of degree. Again

Barth laments this view where "between him and us and our world the relation is that of original to derivate, of beginning to continuation, of source to flow, of perfect to imperfect, not of superiority in principle such as seems to be expressed in the idea of miracle" (1982:18).

Barth finds the paradigm for God's relationship with us "in the idea of miracle." The model of God's relationship to us is the radical otherness which breaks into our world from another. In Schleiermacher that radical discontinuity is ignored or explained away. Schleiermacher's sermons evoke for Barth the appalling image of a river flowing. One is "moved" (*bewegt*) by the flow of peace, but the result is that one then becomes that flow's agent or "propeller " (*Fortbeweger*). All this misses the essential discontinuity between our ways and God's.

The *Fort* of *Fortbeweger* brings us to Barth's next concern. Not only does Schleiermacher infringe upon qualitative difference between Christ and us, but even the quantitative differences are being diminished day by day. We not only move in the Spirit, but move forward. Thus Barth indicates that the Schleiermacherian relationship between our life and Christ's passes in a straight line forward through history. This is nothing but praise of assumed progress. Earlier Barth had noted that

> [o]ne of the most common and typical terms in Schleiermacher's sermons is "increasingly." The divine life is increasingly to glorify itself in us, we are to live in fellowship with him, increasingly clearer, increasingly higher, more glorious, and so on. The special message that Schleiermacher has for the Christian is that he is already in this upward movement that has neither beginning nor end, and that he is to stay in it (1982:25).

The "increasingly" (*immer mehr*) upward movement (*Aufwärtsbewegung*) denies again the fact of God's radical otherness.

Another theme which Barth raises up is that of community. Community joins together the two foci of Schleiermacher's ellipse presenting "the possibility of Christ and man increasingly drawing closer together, the prospect of a full meeting and union of the two, so that the ellipse does in fact become a circle" (1982:49). Community becomes the place of divine fulfillment. Barth shows how Schleiermacher understands human community in his little piece of theological fiction entitled *Christmas Eve*.

In this booklet, a group of people gather on Christmas Eve. They each represent diverse personalities and perspectives on religion. Yet in the warm glow of the celebration, the importance of their differences fades away. They are brought together by the aesthetic beauty of the season, especially its music and decorations, and by the feminine wisdom of the child Sophie and her mother. These females help the men to see the gift that is already among them. The mother exclaims, "In this sense every mother is another Mary. Every mother has an eternal divine child and devoutly seeks the stirrings of the higher spirit within" (1982:60). This mother's confidence that the stirrings are naturally in each person expresses the unity which Schleiermacher treasures and Barth abhors. One of Barth's favorite images for this Schleiermacherian confidence arises out of another sermon.

> We breathe the air and expel it again, only to breathe it afresh. Is this a relation to something specific outside us? Is it a specific knowledge of *ourselves?*... No, it is the general relation of living beings to the whole immeasurable space that belongs to our earth; we breathe in from this and breathe out into it. So it is with love. Spirit seeks spirit because it belongs to it, and wherever it finds it the human heart opens itself to all human life and being on all sides without distinction (1982:13).

Barth takes this not only as Schleiermacher's metaphor for love, but also for all of the theological tasks in which he engaged. Even, according to Barth, preaching becomes nothing more than this sucking and blowing of human wind. With this dynamic, the church loses its calling and is inevitably absorbed into modern society and its prized civilization.

Barth has located all of the interesting characteristics of Schleiermacher's preaching under the category of a peace already won. All divisions are united: God with humanity, humans with their enemies, the preached gift with living of it, the present moment with both yesterday and tomorrow, the church with the whole world outside its boundaries. Finally, Barth hastens to add, though Schleiermacher cries "Peace, peace" at almost every turn, he ultimately stands against one thing. Schleiermacher opposes all that causes rupturing divisions. Barth insists:

> Schleiermacher strives against all strife, against all that comes from it or might lead to it; he allows himself the liberty of being cross with all who are cross and sharp against all who are sharp; he fights zealously for peace and harmony; he is filled with a passion for mediation, agreement, and the quenching of all passion (1982:39).

GOOD FRIDAY SERMONS
THE EVERLASTING CHRIST AND WE, AND WE AND CHRIST

As Barth turns to the Good Friday sermons, he hopes that the cross will confront Schleiermacher with the radical discontinuity that he has ignored thus far. Schleiermacher again lets Barth down. Even at the foot of the cross, we receive little more than warmed over humanity. In fact, the man on the cross does not even move Schleiermacher in the way that the child in the manger had. Barth notices that in the early sermons on the cross:

> The preacher seems to stand intellectually and emotionally at a distance from the theme of the day, the death and passion of Christ. He undoubtably reflects on this but his reflections do not escape a powerful contrary tendency which changes the contemplation of the cross of Christ into man's ethical and psychological self-contemplation–obviously from the standpoint of the cross of Christ, but still *man's* (1982:78).

For Barth, one given theme of Good Friday must be addressed and this somehow exists apart from the concrete lives of the faithful. Barth is especially concerned about the early sermons on the cross where he finds only brief mention of the crucifixion followed by a long section on how we might die with a similar attitude. Barth argues that this humanization of the cross does tend to become more subtle with the passing of time, yet it still ultimately holds sway. He laments, "...the eloquent dialectic which is at work here never found occasion in the presence of *this* subject to halt for once with fear and trembling and to abandon the everlasting Christ and We, and We and Christ, in an attitude of qualified reverence" (1982:78–79). Young or old, Schleiermacher continues his cultural theology even at the foot of the cross. And as he stands in that place, Barth believes his eyes are not really on the crucified, but rather are looking out over the crowd in

search of friends, or perhaps even more to the point, in search of himself. The death of Christ becomes no more than a cipher for the best of humanity living out its providential call in peace.

When commenting on the sermons written in the 1820s, including that one which we shall examine in detail, Barth grieves the way that Scripture is forced to conform to Schleiermacher's melody of a glorious humanity. The harmony of that tune will not be disturbed by the harsh notes of the cross. He writes, "We are dealing with a rounded and consistently-thought-out whole which moves over the toughest biblical sayings, as over all other possibilities of thought, like a roller, leveling and harmonizing everything, triumphantly removing all difficulties" (1982:87).

Thus Schleiermacher, like the God he proclaims, creates a whole or a unity which tramples all that lies in its way. The preacher disregards what might come to him from outside of his own system of thought in order to speak of his personal perceptions on reality. This is Barth's final verdict over all of the sermons which Schleiermacher preached on the cross. Even in Schleiermacher's later years when he paid greater attention to the text and thus allowed the true meaning of the cross to rise up, he still ultimately turned from the necessary message toward his beloved humanity. After looking at Schleiermacher's most mature sermons, Barth writes of these:

> ... here as in the Christmas sermons there can be no doubt that Schleiermacher remained true to himself, that the relationship between then and now is only one of prophecy and fulfillment. As he sees it, the significance of Christ's death is simply that it is the summit of what man can do in relationship to God when the human will is submerged in the divine will (just as the incarnation is simply the triumph of human nature, or enhanced humanity) (1982:90).

Barth's criticism has remained constant throughout. Schleiermacher has denied the either/or of judgment; he has smoothed over all antitheses; he has tamed the divine miracle; he has refused simply to wait for God. As we conclude this section, let us remind ourselves of what Barth had set out to do. He would seek to describe Schleiermacher as Schleiermacher himself would want us to know him. He would not interject his own criticism, but merely make "simple and placid observations and statements" about the man's writings. If this was Barth's goal, he failed. Only in the first handful of pages does he stick to this program; from then on even the most

exegetical sections are heavily seasoned with snorts and retorts by the commentator. Only at the end of the christological section does Barth try to offer some positive statements about the legacy of Schleiermacher. Even in this section he begins by suggesting that ultimately Schleiermacher is a heretic. Moreover, Barth chastises Schleiermacher not only for failing to fulfill Barth's expectations for preaching, but for failing in his own hope of reaching out to the cultural despisers. For they never offered him any thanks when he tried to meet them halfway. According to Barth, the very subject which repulsed the cultural despisers was the only thing that might rescue Schleiermacher from himself.

Schleiermacher could not avoid the particularity of Jesus of Nazareth. For this impropriety, the cultured could never forgive him. Even when he did everything within his power to avoid or tone down Jesus' absoluteness into merely "a supreme relativity," in the end he had to keep returning to that man (1982:104). This downfall in Schleiermacher's own project allows Barth to say that Schleiermacher had to "become and remain a christocentric theologian with an intensity paralleled by few famous theologians" (1982:106).

Yet once this praise has been bestowed, let us be clear that Barth is not commending Schleiermacher. For Barth, Schleiermacher's program did not lend itself to such an intense christocentrism. "His Christology is the incurable wound in his system" (1982:107). This centrality of Christ is not a triumph of Schleiermacher or of his method; it is the triumph of Christ himself who will not tolerate the unity and peace that Schleiermacher tried so hard to construct. For Christ's coming makes humanity's wounds apparent and reveals them as *unheilbare*. Only then can Christ be a Savior (*Heiland*) for that unhealable humanity!

BARTH'S TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: A ROLLER OF HIS OWN

We will now examine Barth's exegesis of the sermon "Christ's Promise to the Thief on the Cross." I have chosen a text which is neither from the early sermons which Barth saw as thinly veiled anthropology nor from the latest sermons which Barth saw as more biblical. "Christ's Promise" stands in the middle of these poles, mediating between them. This sermon was preached on a Good Friday sometime in the early to mid-1820s. Remember that when Barth addressed this middling segment of the sermons, he had accused Schleiermacher of being a "roller" who levels all scriptural

interpretation to his own single point. Barth's commentary on this specific text covers only about one page in his book. Thus we shall listen to his commentary in its entirety, one point at a time. After each of these points, we shall return to the sermon text and ask about the completeness or even validity of his evaluation.

> "Truly, I say to you ..." One should not use this saying to find an example of salvation through belated repentance in the one to whom it was made. A sudden inward conversion of this kind is in conflict with the divine order. We are rather to infer that the thief on the right hand was not such a vile criminal as the other. His request: "Remember me, ..." gives evidence of quiet reflection. The Redeemer's efforts and promises cannot have been alien to him even at an earlier time (1982:83).

One of the difficulties in evaluating Barth's statements is locating precisely where he would have hoped for something more from Schleiermacher. For example, the first sentence of his commentary might suggest that Schleiermacher denies that repentance/conversion happens or claims that salvation is not offered to the one who hung on the cross next to Jesus. Yet, at the very outset of the sermon Schleiermacher has stated that "the Son of God proclaims to a penitent soul not only forgiveness but also blessedness with him and through him" (1987:58). The point of contention here between the two theologians is not so much about what occurs, but how God relates to the world. The words upon which Barth's critique hinge are "belated" and "sudden." For Barth this event between the criminal and Christ as known in Scripture follows the paradigm of miracle in which God breaks in from the outside and does something which is entirely new and without precedent for the criminal. Schleiermacher takes great pains to argue that the most reasonable way to understand what happens as well as what distinguishes the rebuking criminal from the pleading one might be located in the former's prior life. This would better correspond to the "divine order." He is asking if God's glory depends upon a recreation which is ever *ex nihilo*. Would it not be more likely to assume that God is not encountering this sinner for the first time and that God's past working through the Holy Spirit has not been entirely in vain? Though Schleiermacher wishes to argue this on a textual basis, finally he simply appeals to pastoral experience. He notes:

> It often seems to us that God's grace has taken hold of someone's soul all of a sudden. But if we could only penetrate into the soul's inner life and place its whole history before our eyes, we would surely find in every similar case that many earlier moments prepared the way for this decisive one and made it possible; that many a movement of the Holy Spirit that seemed to have been disdained and without consequence actually shook the heart to its very depths and softened it. And in such a progressive working of divine grace we recognize God's order (1987:61).

Schleiermacher has a profound sense that the Holy Spirit has been preparing this person for a moment like this. The difference between Barth and Schleiermacher is not to be found in who brings about the salvation. Schleiermacher is very clear that anything which might have prepared this one to so speak on the cross was the working of the Holy Spirit. The man is not applauded for having cultivated a life ready for faith. Rather the Holy Spirit is confessed as the one who has softened this heart even where the man's response was disdain. Throughout the sermon, *divine* grace and *God's* order make the moment possible. Furthermore, we need to see what this prior preparation really creates in the man, according to Schleiermacher. What is this disposition for grace that God has created? The criminal demonstrates "self-knowledge that does not want to end in condemnation" and "the longing for forgiveness" (1987:62). This is not finally a moral or even spiritual *presence* within the criminal, but the recognition of an *absence* that creates the desire for grace. Let us turn back to Barth's commentary.

> Nor should we infer anything about life in the hereafter from the saying of Jesus. Why should Jesus withhold information about such things from his disciples and then at the last moment reveal it to this man? Neither 'today' nor [the word] 'paradise' is to be taken literally. The heart of the saying is rather that 'you will be with *me*.' This sets the man alongside the oldest and dearest and most worthy of the disciples, for the saying: 'This man has done nothing wrong' [Lk. 23:41] bore witness to his real *faith* (1987:83).

Barth almost seems to imply in this section that Schleiermacher has denied an afterlife, that is, an eschatological time or place beyond the here and now. Yet this could not be Barth's point. Schleiermacher recognizes

that what is at stake is the criminal's "eternal destiny" (*Ewigkeit*) (1987:61). Barth's critique lacks precision; he does not indicate with clarity that Schleiermacher finds a *certain* interpretation of the promise "Today you will be with me in Paradise" problematic. Schleiermacher is responding to some who are claiming that this text means that one goes directly to heaven upon death and need not await a general resurrection. Schleiermacher refuses to accept this interpretation *on the grounds of divine mystery*. Jesus has told his disciples that no one knows the day or the hour; Schleiermacher will not accept the interpretation that here Jesus tells the criminal what he would not tell his disciples. Thus Schleiermacher rejects *certain* interpretations of "today" upon the following presupposition: "The divine decree regarding everything that lies between the moment when each of us departs life and the great day of our common reunion with the Redeemer is a sealed book. We are not able to read in this book, nor to know when the time is coming when it will be opened to us" (1987:62–63).

Or again, "Could we possibly wish to find something in scripture that the holy will of the Highest has hidden from humanity? The Lord himself says that the time and the hour are not ours to know" (1987:63). Instead of speculating about the "when" of our rising to meet him, we should be content to trust that he has gone ahead of us to prepare a place for us and that we shall join him there. An anthropological obsession is not what brings Schleiermacher to exercise caution, as Barth suggests, but rather an anthropological realism that refuses to pry into that which is beyond human knowledge. The interpretation of "today" which Schleiermacher opposes repeats the original sin of Adam and Eve when they sought to be and know as God does (1987:65–66).

Schleiermacher then tries to understand what both "today" and "paradise" might mean if one chooses not to pry into divine secrets. In order to understand this he goes back to the Genesis accounts. For the original humanity, paradise was a place of nearness to God. "The proximity of God whispered around them from his works and declared itself in the inner voice of their heart" (1987:64). Though the Lord chose not to share with us the final sense of paradise yet, at least for today we can hope for the same consciousness of God's gracious and caring nearness. Still working with the Genesis account he recalls that days were marked beginning with nightfall. Therefore, Jesus speaks of the confidence we can have in his

presence with the thief as he enters "a long night of death" until the final rising in all its glory (1987:63).

This brings us to the next point that Barth raises, but also appears to reject. Schleiermacher's claim is that the consciousness of nearness comes through an act of faith. The criminal's faith is twofold. First of all, he recognizes that the death sentence which hangs over his own head is a just one. Secondly, he declares that Jesus has done nothing amiss. For Schleiermacher this confession is taken up into the context of the whole life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus is declared to have done no wrong in his ministry, in his preaching, or in his eternal vision. The criminal's confession of this while looking at the cross could only be an act of faith. A theologian of the cross might notice that the criminal sees God hidden under the opposite (1987:66). Faith is of central importance since "faith alone, justifies before God" (1987:68).

Let us continue to listen to Barth:

> In the feeling of eternal spiritual fellowship with Jesus and his Father the difference between joy and pain was transcended for the malefactor. Today can only denote eternity. The glory of God's presence in the soul is the immortality and life that Christ manifested and that the dying thief is to share with him today and always. Under the most unfavorable outward circumstances he comes to participate in the consciousness and emotions of the Redeemer himself from his childlike submission to the will of God to his holy joy in the salvation of the sinner so happily achieved (1982:83).

Schleiermacher's concern has been to show how the awareness of the gracious presence of the God gave the thief, and also supremely, Jesus, the ability to die in faithful hope. The promise of accompaniment or solidarity made to the thief is the same that was offered to the disciples when Christ promised to be with them even to the end of the age. In light of the nearness of God and of Christ even the criminal's own pain seems to diminish.

Barth continues, "Schleiermacher stresses the fact that the thief would still live a few hours so that the consciousness–his whole theory depends on this–could attain to realization in *time*. At issue in it is not a miraculous gift but a growing life" (1982:83–84). Again Barth gives the impression that the few remaining hours of life in the consciousness of God's

nearness is all that Schleiermacher allows Jesus to offer. Yet, Schleiermacher does not deny that the gift extends into eternity. Again at issue is whether the nature of God's act is always that of miracle. Schleiermacher is not so concerned to prove that the promise should have a chance to grow into fruition in time, but that the offered gift be recognized as both a promise for the future and something that affects us today. The gift of today is enjoyed even as one awaits the "glorious passing over to him" (1987:71).

Returning again to Barth:

> He thus reaches the practical conclusion: "Let us ... as we are all graciously offered be with him already today." In short, the malefactor is not a real malefactor but a secret believer; paradise is not paradise but acceptance into Christ's self-consciousness and the promise "You will be" is not a promise at all but denotes a state that begins at once to become the present, and indeed the temporal present (1982:84).

Barth had claimed earlier that Schleiermacher's one song is "As with Christ, so with us."Schleiermacher does hint at this dynamic even though it is not the centerpiece of this sermon. Yet we are to be like Christ only in terms of his utter confidence *coram dei.* For "...the Redeemer, in his innermost consciousness, even in the moment of death, was certain of the Kingdom his Father had allotted him ..." (1987:70–71).

Yet we should not follow Barth too far down the road of claiming that Schleiermacher's only pattern is "As Christ, so we." At least in this sermon that dynamic is not central. First of all, Schleiermacher's "let us" will not be to follow Christ's example, but to the follow the thief in hearing Christ's gracious promise. The pattern is "As with the criminal, so with us." The activity that would join us to the thief in his blessedness is faith which alone justifies before God. As the criminal believed, so let us believe the promise. Secondly, then, the comfort offered to us banishes all that presses in upon us with the joyous knowledge that Christ gives us eternal fellowship with himself and with the Father. We are invited into this fellowship through God's initiative. Despite what Barth implies, the criminal's sinfulness is never denied by Schleiermacher, nor is the key a "secret faith." The gift removes our past sinfulness and draws us into a future so immense in its eternity that all time distinctions are eradicated.

Thus the gift is "today's." Schleiermacher entreats his listeners to hear the word and let Christ's life shape their own. He calls them to the Sacrament to draw strength there. He closes with a stirring proclamation as he invites the faithful to new life:

> But when we realize with the same honesty as the Lord's companion in death that the Lord had done nothing amiss, but did right in what he did, fulfilling the will of his Father in life and in death; and when it is just as much our eager wish that he think of us after he has entered into his Kingdom, and that he join us to those who will be with him in his Spirit forever; then we will experience with that thief, both living and dying, the blessedness of the word: "Today you will be with me in paradise." Amen (1987:72).

In light of this sermon, we need to rethink some of Barth's earlier comments. Much of his characterizations of Schleiermacher seem not only harsh, but unjust. We have seen that any peace which enters humanity is clearly a divine gift and never one which simply pretends that we are not sinners or that distinctions between us and God do not exist. Schleiermacher does not collapse God into humanity so that they form a single seamless piece. While the preached gift is to be continuous with the living of it, Schleiermacher realizes that this will never be without ambiguity in the Christian's life. The present moment does come together with both yesterday and tomorrow, but only through the gracious, pardoning presence of God. While the young Barth's portrayal of Schleiermacher might indicate some broad distinctions in their respective methodologies, his analysis seems to tell us more about his own theological preoccupations than those of Schleiermacher. We now turn to a Good Friday sermon which Barth himself wrote at the time he was preparing and giving the lectures we have examined. How carefully does he heed the challenges that he raised to Schleiermacher's sermons as he himself preaches?

BARTH'S SERMON

The sermon which we will examine is entitled "Good Friday" and comes from a collection of Barth and Thurneysen's sermons published in German in 1923. Barth preaches on the text of Revelation 1: 17–18: "Fear thou not! I am the first and the last and the living one. I was dead and behold, I

am alive from everlasting to everlasting and have the keys of hell and death."

After reading numerous sermons by Schleiermacher the first thing that strikes one in Barth's sermon is the difference in tone. One certainly does not have the sense of a congenial breathing in and out as Barth had characterized Schleiermacher's style. It is more like Barth has been holding his breath for some time, and now needs to let it all explode out of his mouth in a violent burst of wind. "*Fürchte dich nicht!*" we are told four times in the opening paragraph and ten times words which share the grammatical root of "fear" are used in the same space. To not fear is the sole content of Jesus' life and especially his death. "You should not fear because you need not" (1932:137). The reason you should not fear is because your fears are an error or illusion. The living one confronts us with freedom and fearlessness, will we use it?

Interestingly, the next image that Barth uses sounds at first as though it were right out of Schleiermacher. "Does a child that lies in the arms of its mother need to fear ...?" (1932:137). Yet before too much sentimentality sets in, Barth clarifies that the child does fear when a delirious fever causes it to "see things". We are the delirious child. He then provides a long litany of that which threatens to overwhelm us: anxiety, the failure of our most noble aspirations, the death and ghosts that surround us. There is nothing to do, but recognize that there is no escape for us.

Then Barth reverses the pattern he saw in Schleiermacher: As with us, so with Christ. Christ too suffered in all the ways which we could enumerate; Barth mentions a cascade of attacks on humanity. Then does Christ's fate on the cross not drive us deeper into fear? All of the ambiguity of life also lived in Christ. As with us, so with Christ ... but also something new:

> He, too, is there. Is there an uncertainty, a question, a doubt in you that is not also in Christ? He, too, is with us in death, but the *living one* in the midst of death. In His uncertainty there is certainty, assurance in His doubt, an answer in His question. There is knowledge in His boundless fear which He shares with us, a knowledge that our times rest finally upon the eternality of God, knowledge that good and evil, the righteousness of the high priests and the unrighteousness of the thief on the cross are united in the grace of God, knowledge that the mystery of the future is the mystery of God and for that reason it is a blessed mystery. In that He does not know who He is as He

> is beclouded by the incomprehensibility of human existence; there is one thing He does know and that is that He is in the hands of God ... *there,* where *we* dwell, in this whole perplexity and confusion–in the hands of God! (1932:139–140).

Christ on the cross brings hope! This is not Schleiermacher's Christ who is strong and tranquil in every way upon the cross, but rather Barth's Christ who experiences the full weight of uncertainty. In the midst of uncertainty, he makes clear the one thing that is certain: we are in God hands! The traumatized child can open its eyes and abandon the threatening dreams and know "the love of the mother is *the* real" (1932:140).

Considering the different path Barth takes us on, it is surprising that we do not arrive at a destination so different than Schleiermacher's. We end up with the confidence that God will take care of us even in the midst of death, that our times rest in eternity, that antitheses are brought together in unity, that this is brought to us by the obedience of Christ and that a mother's love symbolizes the really real. Even the boundaries between God's world and ours are broken down. "We see the heavens opened above us, the heaven we have forsaken and to which we are again trekking" (1932:141). This is Barth–not Schleiermacher–telling us that we are back on the road toward heaven! Certainly this power to ascend is a gift only possible when it is given by God's hand, but do we have it? Yes, due to the one who is "with us in our need and struggle, yet who is so different from us" (1932:142). We are freed from fear. By entering into the depths and death of human experience, Christ brings life. He, by his obedience to God, brings about a transformation of cosmic proportions. God has again met with humanity; God's power is with humanity. There is no longer any God-forsakenness. He has come not to make us aware of our sin, but to bring us divine mercy. His blood will be for us, never again against us, for all eternity. And when he speaks reality is made anew. Barth finishes his sermon, "When we hear the voice of Christ as the voice of God and accept it, thankfully answer with the words which we have made our own: It is finished! Yea, Amen, truly, let the whole world praise the Lord!" (1932:145). This sentence follows what Barth called one of Schleiermacher's favorite patterns. As with Christ, so with us; his words become ours.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

We have seen that Barth does not stray finally as far from Schleiermacher as he would desire. In this sermon he dwells as much on anthropological issues as Schleiermacher ever did. The fact that he focuses on humanity's experience of negativity may distinguish him from Schleiermacher's drawing room approach, but the fact is not changed that he does dwell a great deal on humanity. His Christ is also not focusing us toward the next life, but is among us in this life as was Schleiermacher's. Though Barth's analysis of Schleiermacher would drive a wedge between God's world and ours in a rather unbiblical way, finally his focus on Christ will not permit this categorical division, just as Schleiermacher's christological focus denied him a categorical unity.

These two preachers do stand opposed to each other on several points, especially on how God paradigmatically relates to the world. Barth will hold tenaciously to the pattern of miracle wherein God recreates us out of nothing in each instance. Yet he then will have difficulty claiming that God's love really is effective for the world. Schleiermacher will allow for no miraculous moment, preferring to see God present in the divinely established ordering of our everyday life, but this leaves little hope for us in those very painful moments when we know ourselves and our world to be completely lost. Ultimately we must admit that neither approach can be denied before evaluating the particular context in which proclamation will take place. A place for both of these styles exists not only in our living rooms, but also in our pulpits. Being able to see God active in the miraculous, but also in the ordinary, on the cross, but also in our mother's eyes, both in the lyrics and in the melodies of the great hymns is a requisite for being a faithful witness to the God who became incarnate in Jesus. Both of these theologians, perhaps in spite of their own systematic proposals, finally saw both dimensions of Christian confession. Even the youthful Barth was not able to cast out the Schleiermacher within; and for this we can be thankful! The challenge of discernment falls upon today's preachers. We cannot opt once and for all in favor of either radical otherness or extreme continuity as the proper stance for every time, place and people. The task of discerning the proper balance which faithfully will bring the gospel to the people awaits us anew each time we mount the pulpit. And for this too, we can be thankful.

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Israel in God's Country
Amos 5:21–24 in Context

I. BRENT DRIGGERS

I hate, I reject your feast-days,
and I do not smell your festive gatherings,
even if you offer up to me burnt-offerings.
Your grain-offerings I do not accept
and the thank-offering of your fatlings I will not look upon.
Remove from before me the noise of your songs,
for to the melodies of your lyres I will not listen.
But may justice roll like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing wadi.[1]

INTRODUCTION: A NEW APPROACH TO AMOS 5:21–24

AMOS 5:21–24 IS PERHAPS THE MOST FREQUENTLY CITED PASSAGE IN ALL OF Amos. Its call for justice and righteousness, at both the individual and communal levels, is rightly quoted by both Jews and Christians in their quest to end the social and economic exploitation of society's marginalized members. What interpreters often fail to realize, however, is that Amos' condemnation of this exploitation is grounded in the larger problem of Israel's relationship to the land. That is to say that for Amos there is a direct connection between Israel's security in the land and its unjust negligence of the poor and the weak. The temporary success of the northern kingdom during the peaceful reign of Jeroboam II was a cause of great alarm in the prophet's view, for with the wealth and security of an estab-

[1] The above translation is my own. All other scriptual references are taken from the NRSV.

lished society came the polarization of rich and poor and all of the social evils that inevitably followed. Put simply, Israel took the credit for its own existence, its own conquest, and its own security in the land. Failing to recognize God as the source of these gifts meant that the Israelites failed to share those same gifts with the needy in their midst. The problem for Amos, then, is not merely social injustice. It is insolence toward God. The latter is the cause of the former, and both are the cause of God's rejection of Israel's cultic worship.

The present paper reads Amos 5:21–24[2] in light of the underlying theme of land. It begins by demonstrating the importance of this theme in the book as a whole. It then analyzes 5:21–24 in detail in order to show the connection between Amos' repudiation of the cult and Israel's failure to recognize God as the source of all its blessings, as the giver of all its gifts, as the very owner of its land. This approach will shed new light upon a well-trodden passage. Subsequently, a more coherent reading through 5:27 will be possible, for in failing to see the land as a divine gift (vv. 21–24), Israel is ultimately driven by God from that land (vv. 25–27). In short, the present exegesis shows that the point of Amos 5:21–24 is not simply the replacement of cultic ritual with ethical instruction. Cultic ritual *per se* is not the object of Amos' attack. The point is, more importantly, that the God who delivered Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land is the God who administers justice and righteousness by sending those same people into exile, away from the very land which God promised them.

AMOS AS PROPHET OF THE LAND

Hans Eberhard von Waldow describes the relationship between Israel and the land as that of two points on the bottom of a triangle with God as the third and operative point (1974:501–2). The meaning behind this illustration is that: (1) Israel does not exist in isolation from the land but is in effect defined by the promise of it; (2) the land, likewise, is defined only in regards to Israel as the people to whom it is promised; and (3) both Israel and the land exist only in their relationship to Yahweh as the one who brings them both into being. As a country sheep-herder on the one hand, and as a divinely appointed prophet on the other, Amos was no doubt able

[2] Henceforth, all references will be to Amos, unless otherwise indicated.

to appreciate the promised land and the important role that it played in defining Israel's relationship to God. His prophecy is loaded with agrarian imagery illustrating the divine presence behind the mighty works of nature. Moreover, the book bearing his name is a running critique of the "urban" lifestyle, that is, the secure and established way of life that seeks self-fulfillment at the expense of the poor and the needy, forgetting that the gifts of life—and, in this case, the gifts of the land—are provided by God and God alone.

The most obvious examples in Amos of God's relationship to the land (and nature in general) can be found in the hymnic fragments at 4:13 and 5:8. Here God is described as the one who "forms the mountains and creates the wind," who "made the Pleiades and Orion," and who "calls for the waters of the sea." Elsewhere in Amos, God stands behind natural disasters such as famine, drought, and plague (4:6–10) and is capable of sending forth crop-consuming locusts (7:1–2) and fire (7:4–5). When God speaks "the shepherds' pasture grounds mourn and the summit of Carmel dries up" (1:2), and when Amos proclaims God's message "the land is unable to endure his words" (7:10). Twice Amos reminds his listeners that their God is the one who delivered them out of Egypt (3:1; 9:7), a statement that, by implication, reminds them that the divine gift of their land is not to be taken for granted. Indeed, in Amos' view, Israel does not own the land at all. Israel is rather a resident in God's land.

Amos' denouncements of the settled, urban life are also easy to find. In the oracles against the nations (1:3–2:16), there is the divine promise to "send fire upon" the fortifications of a particular city. Thus, it seems that for Amos physical buildings are symbolic of the selfishly ambitious people who erected them. The Israelites in particular are described as "those who hoard up violence and devastation in their citadels" (3:10). As a consequence, God will execute justice by destroying "the winter house," "the summer house," the "houses of ivory," and "the great houses." Perhaps the most condemning illustration of this established way of life comes at 6:4–7, where the seemingly secure and care-free ones who "sprawl on their couches and eat lambs from the flock" are promised a place "at the head of the exiles." The implication in this case is that the people who rest lazily and ignore the plight of the needy will be sentenced to lead an entire nation into exile. Thus, the ones who take the promised land for granted are the first ones to lose it. The theme of the land in Amos' prophecy has

now been firmly established. It remains to be seen how 5:21–24 can be explained with this theme in mind.

EXEGESIS OF AMOS 5:21–24

5:21a: שנאתי מאסתי חגיכם

Read in its larger context, v. 21 serves as the divine contrast to the human transgressions at 5:10. To the ones who "hate [שנא] him who reproves in the gate" and "abhor [תעב] him who speaks with integrity," God replies through Amos: "I hate [שנא], I reject [מאס] your feast-days." Already, then, the pericope seems to be more than a simple denouncement of cultic ritual *per se*. Rather, it is connected to the preceding list of wrongdoings at 5:10–15.[3] Cultic worship, in other words, is integrally related to the issue of social justice in the everyday world. Yahweh hates the worship of those who fail to administer that justice. In typical fashion, however, Amos makes the point with a surprising and ironic twist. As 5:18–21 shows, Israel's expectations of God, especially as they are connected to the coming "day of the Lord," are, in fact, backwards.[4] Light is really darkness, a safe escape will bring disaster, and a secure home is full of danger. Such is the context in which Amos' audience finds itself.

Of the two opening verbs in v. 21, the first would probably have been the most surprising, perhaps even shocking, to Amos' listeners. Of the 112 uses of the verb שנא in the Old Testament, only eighteen times is God used as its subject. Moreover, of these eighteen times, the subject of God's hatred is usually an abstract "sin" such as pride, evil, or idolatry. When the verb does take a "human" object it is, as in Amos 5:21, taken only indirectly through the use of a possessive suffix or construct state, for instance "Jacob's strongholds" (6:8), "my house" (Jer 12:8), or "your ancestors" (Hos 9:15).[5] The latter two examples are from later prophets, in which case

[3] As James Mays explains, the gate "was the regular place in which the local courts of Israel's towns and cities were held (Ruth 4.1, 10f.; Amos 5.12, 15)." Thus it was the place at which justice was expected to be carried out (1969:93).

[4] "Commentators generally agree that in Amos' time 'the Day of Yahweh' popularly was thought to mean the time when Yahweh would vindicate Israel by defeating its enemies" (Hiers, 1992:82).

[5] The only exception is the singling out of Esau at Mal 1:3, but there he is meant to represent the Edomites as a whole.

one can perhaps say that Amos was treading on new prophetic ground. For Yahweh to "hate" not just the evils of the world but an aspect of his own people, particularly its cultic worship, would have been ironically condemning to say the least.

The second verb, מאס, is more commonly used to describe divine disapproval, either in the sense of "to despise" or "to reject." Of its 76 occurrences, 31 have God as the subject. Individuals are also more frequently singled out as the objects of this verb. In fact, it *never* directed against an abstract human "sin" but only at humans themselves, whether it be "the tent of Joseph" (Ps 78:67), "the wicked ones" (Jer 6:30), or "Israel's offspring" (Jer 31:37). Secondly, it is worth noting that מאס is, in five instances, used negatively to describe the divine *mercy*. Thus God can say to Israel, "I have chosen you and not rejected you" (Isa 41:9), or to Moses, "I will not reject [Israel]...breaking my covenant with them" (Lev 26:44).[6]

Finally, מאס is used nineteen times to describe a human rejection of the divine, specifically the rejection of God's "instruction" (Isa 5:24), "teaching" (Jer 8:9), or other similar things.[7] Moreover, of these nineteen occurrences, five are related specifically to the wilderness motif. At Lev 26:15 God describes to Moses the consequences should Israel "reject" the divine statutes. In Num 11:20 God explains the divine punishment for Israel: "because you have rejected the Lord who is among you and have wept before him, saying 'Why did we ever leave Egypt?'" Most importantly for this study, however, are the three occurrences in Ezekiel (20:13, 16, 24) that occur in relatively identical passages. Ezekiel 20:16–17, for instance, reads:

> And also I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands, because they *rejected* my ordinances, and as for my statutes, they did not walk in them; they even profaned my sabbaths, for their heart continually went after their idols. Yet my eye spared them rather than destroying them, and I did not cause their annihilation in the wilderness.

[6] The other three instances are Jer 33:26; Job 8:20; and 36:5.

[7] Lev 26:15, 43; Num 11:20; 2 Sam 8:7; 10:19; 15:23, 26; 2 Kgs 17:15; Job 5:17; Isa 5:24; 30:12; Jer 6:19; 8:9; Ezek 5:6; 20:13, 16, 24; Amos 2:4.

Granted, the verb is used in 5:21 by Amos to describe *God's* rejection of Israel's worship and not Israel's rejection of God's law. However, it seems safe to say that מאס could have conjured up images—possibly through oral tradition—of Israel's own past transgressions, perhaps even those transgressions related to the trials in the wilderness. At the very least, one could say that this verb is particularly appropriate for a prophecy moving toward the judgment of another exile (5:27). Thus, already at v. 21 Amos is foreshadowing—albeit implicitly—a time in which Israel will again be landless.

Adding considerable weight to this theory is the fact that in v. 21 God hates חגיכם ("your feast-days"). As Mays explains, the חג was "the general term used in the old festival lists as the common name for Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Booths, the three annual pilgrimage festivals" (1969:106). Their institution can be found in two places, Exod 23:14–18 and 34:18–24, both of which connect the feast of Unleavened Bread to the time when Israel "came out of Egypt"(Exod 23:25; 34:18). Most scholars today believe that both references to Egypt are later glosses (leaving them to debate what the meaning behind the feast of Unleavened Bread originally was), but this does not change the fact that tradition found it necessary to associate the two. Besides, as Exodus 12–13 clearly show, later redactors even combined the feast with the Passover meal, making it a fixed marker in celebration of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt (Bokser 1992:757). For Yahweh to hate the feast of Unleavened Bread, then, is tantamount to God hating the very event that it celebrates, that is, the lifting up of an enslaved Israel into a land of its own.

Although the other two feast days, Weeks and Booths, are not explicitly linked to Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, one does not have to search far to see an obvious connection. The first is called "the feast of the harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field" (Exod 23:16a). The second is called "the feast of the ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field" (Exod 23:16b). The common element in both is Israel's returning *to* Yahweh the gifts of the land that Yahweh has given. Taken together, then, they celebrate the fact that the Israelites have been given a land in the first place, a land upon which they are able to harvest their own food. Whereas the first feast-day commemorates Israel's deliverance, the second two commemorate – albeit implicitly again—Israel's conquest. Most importantly, both celebrate the gifts *of* Yahweh, namely his lifting them out of a

foreign land and into Yahweh's own promised land. Von Waldow explains this indebtedness to God well:

> The idea that a god owns all the land where his worshipers live is actually an old Canaanite concept, where Baal or the Baalim are the owners of all the landed properties, fields, vineyards, orchards, together with all the springs, trees, hills, and the like. They gave rain and fertility to the land, and thus make possible the living of their worshipers. Accordingly, the Baalim receive worship to assure rainfall and fertility. When, however, the Israelite tribes and clans entered the Canaanite world by settling in Palestine, their religion of Yahweh from Mount Sinai or of the Gods of their Fathers was not related to a way of life on arable land. Consequently, when the Israelites first turned the sod of Canaan, they became dependent upon the blessings of its gods. This means that the change of the culture by the newcomers in Canaan was necessarily a move toward syncretism unless a way was found to relate the new life, with its dependence on rain and fertility, to Yahweh. The simplest way to cope with this crucial problem was for them to follow the Canaanite example and to conceive of Yahweh as the owner of the land and the giver of its fertility.... That they did so is indicated by the many cultic practices related to agrarian life, which the Israelites adopted from the Canaanites and related to their God Yahweh. All these practices must be seen against the background that Yahweh is the owner of the land (1974: 494).

5:21b-23: ולא אריח בעצרתיכם כי אם תעלו לי עלות
ומנחתיכם לא ארצה ושלם מריאיכם לא אביט
הסר מעלי המון שריך וזמרת נבליך לא אשמע

It should first be noted that the above grouping of verses does not mean to detract from the continuity of thought inherent in v. 21. The connecting *waw*, for instance, demands that, textually speaking, one must hold the two phrases together. The use of the nouns חג and עצרה also demands this, logically speaking, insofar as the former (חג) represents "the days fixed by law that are traditionally kept by the people" and the latter (עצרה) represents "the festive gatherings on those days." One is simply a more specific description of the other.

There are, however, reasons to group these verses in the above manner. Francis Anderson and David Noel Freedman note the parallel structure of both phrases of v. 21, but whereas the structural balance between v. 21a and v. 21b is near perfect—consisting of "a bicolon 3:3 (accents) and 9:10 (syllables)" (1989: 523)—the structural balance between v. 21b and v. 22c comes just as close, with a bicolon 3:4 (accents) and 10:10 (syllables). In addition to this, there is the connection between three of the four verbs ascribed to God, each representing a different physical sense: ריח ("smell," v. 21b), נבט ("look," v. 22), and שמע ("hear," v. 23). The first of these, ריח, makes more sense when read in conjunction with the beginning of v. 22 ("even if you offer up to me burnt-offerings"). The ascending aroma of the עלות, in other words, fits better with God's sense of smell than the more general "sacred assembly" (cf. Gen 8:21).[8] For these reasons it seems that, thematically speaking, vv. 21b-23 belong together. Verse 21b may indeed be an elaboration upon v. 21a (thereby requiring one to read them together), but so too is the whole of vv. 21b-23. What Amos has done, in effect, is to list the various aspects of Israel's cultic worship in order of increasing specificity, from appointed feast-days, to the festive gatherings, to the specific sacrifices made, to the celebratory music.

The phrase כי אם at the beginning of v. 22 is problematic. Following a negative clause, it usually functions as an adversative construction meaning "except" or "unless" (cf. 3:7). This kind of reading, however, introduces tremendous logical inconsistency into the passage since the overall theme is, at the most obvious level, the divine rejection of cultic practice. Neither should one read the כי as being strictly causal since the larger context containing vv. 21–24—not to mention Amos as a whole—describes social injustice and not cultic ritual as the basis for God's wrath. Thus, it seems that a more literal reading of the phrase is in order, with the כי serving as a deictic participle of emphasis: "even if" (Weiss, 1995:204).

In targeting the three sacrifices of עלה, מנחה, and שלם, Amos does not exhaust the list of cultic rituals. He does, however, pronounce a general divine rejection of the cult as a whole (this of course being different from the cult *per se*, as already noted above). Since both עלה and מנחה

[8] Of course, the verb ריח carries the figurative meaning of "to delight" in regard to God's approval of sacrifices. Thus, most English translations avoid the literal meaning of "smell." However, in light of the other sensory verbs employed in this section, it seems that the literal meaning of ריח should be kept.

(normally "gift" or "tribute") can often refer to sacrifices in general, the more awkward phrase at v. 22a is regarded by some as a superfluous addition. This more general naming of sacrifice, however, is typically reserved for the pairing of one of the above with the noun זבח ("sacrifice")[9] but not with each other. When both עלה and מנחה do appear together, the first retains its normal meaning of "burnt-offering" while the second becomes more specifically "cereal or grain-offering."[10] The above translation reflects this specific meaning.

The burnt-offering was an animal sacrifice wherein the animal was consumed in its entirety upon the altar. Although it served in some limited capacity as an atonement for the sins of the offerer (Lev 1:4), it was primarily considered the divine "food," the smell of which attracted God's attention and ensured the divine presence in the temple. Thus, the עלה was an important—if not primary—means by which cultic worshipers maintained their access to God. In Gary Anderson's words, "[n]o greater calamity could be imagined than the loss of this sacrifice, since it symbolized the severing of the divine-human relationship" (1992:878).[11] In regard to the שלם, or "thank-offering," the same would be true.[12] These were the celebratory (and completely non-atoning) sacrifices wherein the

[9] For the first pair see 5:25, as well as 1 Sam 2:29; 3:14; Ps 40:7; Isa 19:21; Dan 9:27. For the second pair, see Exod 10:25; Lev 17:8; Deut 12:6, 11; 1 Sam 15:22; 2 Kgs 5:17; Isa 1:11; 56:7.

[10] See Lev 23:37; Num 29:16; Josh 22:23; Isa 1:11, 13; 43:23; Jer 14:12. As Shalom Paul notes, a second view explains the apparent superfluousness of v. 22a by arguing that a concluding phrase has been dropped, one that followed v. 22a and thereby served as a direct parallel to v. 21. Against this view, Paul argues convincingly that the second-person suffix of מנחתיכם serves as a "double-duty suffix" for both nouns. Thus, one need not view the use of עלה and מנחה as needless repetition (1991:190).

[11] Cf. also Dan 8:11.

[12] See Gary Anderson (1992:878) on why the normal translation of "peace-offering" is not entirely accurate. This is the only occurrence of the noun in the singular, an oddity which may be attributed to haplography (the final ם attaching itself to the preceding plural noun מריאיכם). On the other hand, Paul explains that "there is no need to doubt its authenticity or to emend it to the plural שלמי. The singular is documented several times in the Punic tariffs from Marseilles (dated to the fourth or third century B.C.E.) as *šlm kll*" (1991:191). For the purpose of this study, however, the noun's number is considerably less important than the noun's meaning.

animal was slain and then consumed by the worshiper. Thus, whereas the עולות nourished the deity, the שלמים nourished the people. They served as meals of celebration and thanksgiving for God's continued presence, playing an important role on feast-days (G. Anderson 1992:878–79).

At v. 23 Amos' movement from the general to the specific reaches its climax. What began as a rejection of Israel's feast-days in general is now the rejection of an individual's music on those feast-days. This explains the sudden and seemingly problematic shift to the singular imperative הסר (Hiphil of סור, "remove") as well as the perplexing use of the singular שלם (what better way to celebrate and give thanks than with music?). Amos, then, moves from the general to the specific both in regard to cultic ritual practices and in regard to his own addressee(s), not necessarily with a specific individual in mind but for the purpose of intensifying his message.[13] This rejection of the individual's music draws an emphatic conclusion to Israel's cultic worship as a whole. Moreover, the vocabulary of v. 23 points readers forward to the condemned pleasure seekers of 6:4–6, the ones who use the same נבל ("harp") to "sing idle songs" (הפרטים, much like the "noise," המון, at v. 23).[14] In both cases, Amos is pronouncing a drastic reversal of his listeners' expectations. Just as the Day of the Lord is darkness and not light, so Israel's worshipful and praise-filled rituals merely provoke God's wrath.

Insofar as vv. 21b-23 are, structurally speaking, an elaboration upon v. 21a, it is difficult to find a direct connection to the wilderness motif or to Amos' underlying theme regarding "the land" (at least until one comes to v. 25). In regard to the *meaning* of these cultic rituals, however, Amos' pronouncement of the divine rejection of the cult is highly relevant. In rejecting these different sacrifices God has, in effect, rejected all of what Israel's land has to offer, from livestock to grain. The rejection of the land is then intensified as Amos turns toward the individual worshiper. Thus, the Israelite may very well celebrate the gifts of the land, but God has rejected them both, that is, both the gift and the giver. The recurring second person pronouns are also worth noting insofar as they emphasize Israel's collec-

[13] Anderson and Freedman suggest Jeroboam II or Amaziah the priest as possible addressees (1989:528), but this seems unlikely considering the shift back to the plural at v. 25.

[14] At 6:5, the lavish and excessive feasts of "lambs" and "calves" may also echo the cultic "fatlings" (מריאיכם) mentioned in v. 23.

tive (or the worshiper's individual) autonomy *vis-à-vis* God. It is as if their sacrifices of animals, their offerings of grain, and their songs of praise are not really intended for God at all. Instead, Amos refers to them as "your" offerings and "your" songs. This is quite a contrast to the words of God at Lev 25:23: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine, for you are strangers and sojourners with me." The worshipers addressed in 5:21–23 have assumed an entirely different attitude. They are no longer fellow sojourners with God but fixed and secure residents in *their own* land. As a result, their worship is rendered worthless.

Thus, these verses may be far removed in *content* from the wilderness/land theme, but they take on a whole new light—perhaps even the light in which Amos intended for them to be cast—when they are read side by side with, for example, the story of the manna from heaven in Exod 16:1–21. Whereas the first passage shows a self-sufficient but forgetful people being rejected by their God, the second shows a desperate and dependent people for whom God provides. Whereas the first people worship elaborately and live abundantly only to be the object of God's hatred, the second people receive from God only what they need and are no less off for it. In the end, the first are rejected by God in the very act of worship, thereby severing their access to God completely. The second, however, despite their constant murmuring, are both nourished and led by God.

5.24: ויגל כמים משפט וצדקה כנחל איתן׃

Whether or not one interprets v. 24 as a description of divine action or as a prescription for human action, it can be aptly described as "the divine alternative." It is meant, in other words, to be seen *in contrast* to the preceding section, not only to the empty worship practices of vv. 21–23 but also to the social injustices of vv. 10–15. This reading differs from older scholarship that, following the LXX translation, read the *waw* as consecutive (=*και*). In this case, the contrast with the preceding verses is downplayed in order to show a consistent divine judgment throughout vv. 21–24. J. Philip Hyatt (1957) took a more independent route by reading the *waw* as denoting purpose. His reading seems forced, however, insofar as it adds a relative clause and makes v. 24 too dependent upon v.23 to the exclusion of the other preceding verses.

In the end, the way that one interprets the initial *waw* is integrally related to the way that one interprets the verbal form ויגל (either as jussive

or imperfect from גלל, "to roll,") as well as the logical thrust of the overall unit. Earlier scholarship often read a *waw*-consecutive because it wanted to maintain the divine initiative. As a consequence, it tended to read the verb as an imperfect future. More recent scholarship, however, reads the *waw* as adversative and therefore the verb as jussive because it wants to maintain the contrast with vv. 21–24. In these later readings the jussive verb tends to take the force of an imperative, thereby reducing the action to a human requirement. The solution, it seems, is two-fold. On the one hand, the *waw* should be recognized as adversative since this is the general rule when a positive clause follows a negative clause (Kautzsch 1983:500). On the other hand, although this reading requires a jussive form, it does not necessarily follow that it must be given imperatival force. This is because when jussives take inanimate things as their subjects (in this case "justice" and "righteousness") the emphasis lies more upon the action than on the actor (Waltke and O'Connor 1990:570). Moreover, as Jon L. Berquist notes, the fact that Amos uses a second-person imperative in the preceding verse leaves one to wonder why he couldn't have done it again in v. 24 if he meant the same thing (1993:56).

Thus, the present reading of v. 24 continues the description of a divine action (as opposed to a divine command) *while at the same time* serving as a contrast to the preceding verses. Over against the cultic rituals there will be justice and righteousness, but God, as the one who rejects those rituals, is the same one who brings forth that justice and righteousness. After all, as 5:8 clearly explains, "the one who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the Lord is his name." Surely those waters, mentioned in such close connection to the justice and righteousness of 5:7, are the same ones that Amos pronounces at 5:24. Furthermore, as Berquist has shown in a study too detailed to repeat here, the very concepts of "justice" (משפט) and "righteousness" (חדקה) are in prophetic literature more like "attributes or activities of the deity, rather than the result of human accomplishment" (1993:60).[15] Shalom Paul, citing Isa 48:18, rejects this kind of interpretation on the grounds that it fails to consider the necessary contrast with vv. 22–23. According to his reading of the verse, the divine-human relationship in Amos is contingent only

[15] I admit that this is a debatable point, and readers are encouraged to consult Berquist's article. He analyzes the occurrences of this pair of words in the prophets and in Amos in particular. See also Hyatt (1957:19–23).

"upon an absolute inviolable commitment to an ethical-moral way of life" (1991:193). It should be sufficiently clear by now, however, that although v. 24 is meant as a contrast, it is not meant as a human imperative. According to Amos, Israel in this instance can be seen only in opposition to justice and righteousness (5:7, 15; 6:12), not as proponents of such. In fact, the prior contrast between Israel's cultic worship and the divine rejection could even be interpreted as a reversal of a prior contrast, namely the one between justice and righteousness on the one hand and Israel's destruction of them on the other hand.

Thus, the adjective אֵיתָן ("ever-flowing") is particularly appropriate when read in light of this human failure. Whereas Israel turns justice "into wormwood" and casts righteousness "down to the earth," God will bring forth both unceasingly. Human transience is replaced with divine permanence. The image of an ever-flowing wadi would have been particularly effective in this regard, especially for listeners who knew only the seasonal kind. Taken out of context v. 24 could probably be interpreted as a sign of divine favor, as a promise that Israel's land would never lose its fertility. Archaeological evidence, for instance, suggests that in the ancient Near East "a deity could be represented as being the source of water—probably the 'water of life'—which flowed forth for the benefit of the people" (Hyatt 1957:23). Moreover, the purifying effects of water can be found in Isa 1:16, a verse whose immediate context provides a well-known parallel to Amos 5:21–24. However, when read in conjunction with vv. 21–23 (and also vv. 25–26), the irony of divine judgment simply cannot be avoided. Berquist, for instance, reasons that v. 24 should be read, even in light of Isa 1:16, as a declaration of wrathful punishment, much like a flood, wherein God "calls justice and righteousness upon the people in destruction and purging" (1993:57). Such an interpretation is much more consistent with the divine disapproval of vv. 21–23 as well as the divine decree of vv. 25–27. In this case, the entire pericope (vv. 21–27) consists of a continuous judgment of God upon the people of Israel, the first part of this judgment taking the form of the divine rejection of their cultic rituals, the second part taking the form of the divine "alternative": the rolling forth of justice and righteousness—כנחל איתן.

A COHERENT READING OF AMOS 5:21–27

This exegesis of vv. 21–24 has tried to show that God's rejection of Israel's cult is grounded in Israel's own failure to recognize God as the owner of its land. Returning to von Waldow's triangle, Israel has neglected the third and most important point, defining itself exclusively in terms of the land without regard for the God who led it from bondage to conquest in the first place. Israel sees God's land as *its own* land, God's festivals as *its own* festivals, God's sacrifices as *its own* sacrifices, and God's songs as *its own* songs. In short, Israel has turned worship of God into worship of self, and as a consequence its social transgressions are manifold. For this reason, God rejects that self-worship, not by way of ethical prescription (they already have God's statutes and ordinances), but by way of an ever-flowing river. Israel has turned God's justice into wormwood and has cast God's righteousness to the ground, but God will recall those waters and pour them out on the surface of the earth—once and for all.

If such an interpretation of vv. 21–24 is accurate, then the pronouncement of exile in vv. 25–27 should come as no real surprise. It is an appropriately emphatic conclusion that should never be read in isolation from the preceding verses.[16] Thus, just as vv. 21b-23 serve as an elaboration upon v. 21a, so also do vv. 25–27 serve as an elaboration upon v. 24. The first is a description of the divine rejection, (vv. 21–23) while the second is a description, in full, of the divine alternative (vv. 24–27). Scholars frequently note the word-play between the verb גלל ("to roll") at v. 24 and the verb גלה ("to exile") at v. 27. Rarely, however, do they draw attention to the *thematic* connection between them. They are really two different illustrations of the same divine judgment. Israel will be cast from the land, no longer able to define itself in terms of that land, no longer able to engage in steadfast self-worship. Israel will be reintroduced to the God it has forgotten, to the God who will remind it that "the land is mine, for you are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev 25:23).

Of course many questions remain concerning vv. 25–27, none of which can be given sufficient attention here. In regard to the way that Amos views

[16] Time and space do not permit me to translate and exegete 5:25–27, one of the most textually problematic passages in the Old Testament. Readers who do not wish to examine the difficult Hebrew text should consult the NRSV's translation.

Israel's prior time in the wilderness, the present exegesis holds to a positive view: it was the time in which Israel depended most heavily upon God. At the very least it was a time in which God proved faithful in spite of Israel's constant murmuring. Thus, the expected answer to the rhetorical question at v. 25 would be "no," Israel did not bring sacrifices and gifts to God in the wilderness.[17] Still, it should be clear that the present exile, although patterned after the wilderness experience, is nonetheless a form of divine punishment. Israel's sins have no doubt invoked God's wrath. What is punishment for some is liberation for others, however, since the poor and the needy, by means of this same wrath, will no longer be sold and trampled upon. Thus, God's judgment and God's mercy are simply two different expressions of the same divine will. Likewise, God's justice and righteousness are two sides of a single divine deliverance (Hyatt 1957:21). On the one hand, they mean deliverance out of Egypt, through the waters of the Red Sea and into the promised land of Canaan, while on the other hand, they mean exile out of Canaan, through the waters of God's "everflowing" stream and into a land "beyond Damascus." In both instances, the oppressed are raised up and cleansed and the oppressors are drowned beneath divine judgment. The Israelites may be cast out of the land, and they may be forced to carry foreign gods (v. 26), but if their prior time in the wilderness is any indication, then Yahweh will not fail to nourish them and lead them back once again to the land that Yahweh has chosen (9:11–15).

[17] Even if one were to prove that v. 26 is a rare allusion to idolatry in the wilderness, it would not detract from the central point of this paper, that vv. 21–24 should be read in light of Israel's relationship to the land through God. Such an argument would no doubt change the way that one reads vv. 25–27, but the present "new approach" to vv. 21–24 could still be taken into consideration.

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Ethics' Indigestion or Postmodernity's Malaise? A Critical Analysis of John D. Caputo's *Against Ethics**

CHRISTOPHER S. D. ROGERS

In a fascinating way, the interdisciplinary imperative of theological reflection is both facilitated and necessitated by postmodern culture. Postmodernism challenges the legitimacy of theology's past self-isolation and total reliance on certain *grand récits*, i.e., universal metanarratives, but, through its legitimization of such subjective notions as "values, ultimate ends, or the meaning of life," postmodernism also challenges reigning scientific rationality models that have largely excluded theology's voice as a discipline "unable to meet the requirements of objective evidence" (Rossouw 1993:896–97).

While scholars differ in both their definitions of postmodernity and in their proposed responses to postmodernity, it is clear that contemporary scholarship takes place in an environment which poses serious challenges to all forms of knowledge and particularly to any proposition that claims to be true, ultimate, absolute, self-evident, value-free, or objective. Because religion has often claimed to be *true* in its depiction of reality, in its knowledge of creation, and in its knowledge of God, it has become a prime target of postmodern critique. Likewise, because Christian ethics often *prescribes* action based upon the *asserted truthfulness* of Christian theological statements, it too must take postmodern challenges seriously. It is for these reasons that, as a Christian social ethicist, I enter into dialogue with John

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D. Caputo's contentions in *Against Ethics.* This work offers one of the more sustained postmodern critiques of the practice of ethics.

There is an inherent risk in such a dialogue. Caputo's work seeks to show that "the deconstruction of ethics is ethics' own doing, ethics' own undoing, right before our eyes" (1993:4). He attempts not only to deconstruct ethics but argues that "we do not need ethics, that there is something to be said for getting beyond ethics, or even for taking a stand against ethics" (Caputo 1993:2). His firm conviction that there are no facts, no truths, no Being, and no metanarratives for organizing and guiding our way through life presents a challenge not only to how ethics is done, but whether ethics can be done at all.

This essay is divided into two major parts. In part one, I carefully examine and explicate at length the main tenets of Caputo's challenge to ethics and his arguments for a "poetics of obligation." This constitutes the major task of the essay. In part two, I argue that Caputo's task is ultimately untenable due to a deleterious concept of postmodernity. I argue that certain elements of postmodernity can be accepted and incorporated into a responsible Christian social ethics, but that Caputo's total rejection of ethics is misplaced and strangely indicative of a first-world, upper-middle class *malaise.*

ETHICS' INDIGESTION: CAPUTO'S CHALLENGE TO ETHICS

In the beginning of *Against Ethics,* John Caputo makes a straightforward claim: "I am against ethics" (1993:1). This one-sentence paragraph presents the reader with Caputo's primary thesis and task. He is against ethics, which he believes is a form of philosophy derived from "higher meanings," and which seeks to provide a safe way to navigate the road of life. Caputo believes that the road of life is not safe, is in fact dangerous, and no organizing principles or laws can guide one safely along the way. His primary task is to explain why this is so.

As part of Caputo's deconstruction of ethics he argues for a "poetics of obligation." This obligation is something that merely happens. One should not try, for indeed it is not possible, to know from where obligation comes or for what purpose. Caputo's task is to show that responsible life can be lived with a poetics of obligation unsupported by ethical, philosophical, or theological foundations.

Disasters: the Beginning of Ethics' Indigestion

Life, for Caputo, is a disaster. Not a natural disaster such as a hurricane or a tornado, yet if given dates and names these events are also disasters. Rather, he claims that "to suffer a disaster is to lose one's star (*dis-astrum*), to be cut loose from one's lucky or guiding light" (Caputo 1993:6). Furthermore, to suffer disaster, to lose one's faith in the *grand récits,* means that

> one responds with disbelief to sweeping narratives, that one declines fine names like Ethics and Metaphysics, Science and Religion, that one refuses to crown anything with capital letters, that Being, presence, *ousia*, the transcendental signified, History, Man—the list goes on—have all become dreams (Caputo 1993:6).

According to Caputo, ethics lays down a road map, a guide through the changing vicissitudes of life. It tries to expect the unexpectable, give shelter from the storm, give reason where reason seems absent, and provide clues for how to act and respond. Caputo, however, claims to have lost faith in the *grand récits,* and he feels "forsaken by such starry guides" as ethics. Living in disaster, he concedes, is not a matter of replacing ethics with some new guide or organizing center, but instead living without such a guide.

Within life there are many disasters, but they cannot be seen or understood from the perspective of a grand scheme. According to Caputo, life consists of multiple disasters. Disasters are concrete and actual events, "the sort that can be measured in terms of failure, loss, and catastrophic destruction" (Caputo 1993:28). One attaches dates to disasters so that they are viewed as multiple singularities and not as part of one singular, depoliticized disaster guiding the pulse of life. Disasters have no regard for humans, no ultimate meaning, no traceable grand origin; they simply happen.

Disasters involve pain and suffering, but not all pain and suffering are disasters. The attainment of life's greatest achievements involves sweat, pain, and some degree of suffering. Yet suffering marks all disasters. They are sheer waste and destruction. To be the victim of disaster, or a witness to disaster, is to look around and see no greater cause, no recompense for the cost, no meaning in the waste. Disasters "are an abyss, an *a-logos,* an

a-nomos" (Caputo 1993:29). For these reasons, ethics cannot digest disasters. It can take them in and swallow them, but it cannot contain them. Caputo writes:

> Disasters are events that "ethics"—which turns on *logos/ratio/nomos*—cannot contain, that ethics cannot bring under the rule of its *principium* or *arche,* under any of its favorite master names, that ethics cannot master. Disasters constitute a loss for which there is no *ratio reddenda*, a loss which is without why, groundless (1993:29).

Nonetheless, ethics tries to contain disasters and to make sense of the senseless.

Obligation and Proper Names
Ethics' Stomach Ache Worsens

A disaster, for example, the face of a child with AIDS, can often cause an *obligation*. An obligation, according to Caputo, is "a certain communication, a very earthbound signal that is transmitted without the help of heavenly satellites" (1993:24). Caputo offers no theory of obligation because he admits that the loss of his satellite deprives him of any theoretical standpoints. What he offers instead is *description*, a description of obligation—a series of images and feelings—or, as he says, a "poetics of obligation."

A central point in Caputo's poetic of obligation is that *obligation happens.* One must not look for the source of obligation, because it cannot be found. In contrast to the senseless search for a source, Caputo posits:

> *Es gibt:* there is obligation (Heidegger). *Il arrive*: it happens (Lyotard). Obligation is a fact, as it were (Kant). Here I am (*me voici*), on the receiving end of an obligation (Levinas) (1993:6-7).

Obligation happens, and it lays hold of us. We cannot explain it, only follow it or ignore it. Disasters happen. Events happen. What "happens is what there is (*es gibt*). That is all.... *Es Gibt, weil es gibt*: There is because there is" (Caputo 1993:223). He seeks to describe, confront, and live in the midst of what is happening. One does not ask whence events, disasters, and obligations come or for what purpose they come. Trying to answer these questions, Caputo claims, requires one to have a "prodigious

head for profundity" (1993:5). Because he claims not to have such a prodigious head, Caputo chooses to speak in minimalist terms, merely noting what happens. He writes:

> Events happen without "why." There is no "why" outside what happens, no Meta-event that dominates other events, that serves as the point and purpose of what happens. Whatever is outside what happens is what does not happen.... *"Es gibt"* is a way of saying that we can lay claim to no star to guide us, no ground to found us, no deep core of *eidos* or *ousia, Sein* or *Geist,* to see us through the flux of events (Caputo 1993:223,225).

Caputo tries to remain very consistent in his claim that he does not offer "deep-thought" or some revision of German philosophy. There is, he claims, no ground, no purpose, and no reason; there only *is*. Caputo works hard at presenting himself as a mere observer of phenomena—a collector of pieces of obligation.

Because obligation happens without a "why" or a "from where," Caputo claims that we must "concede that, when it comes to obligation, we do not know what we are talking about" (1993:84). Still, he insists that we must talk about obligation, if for no other reason than the fact that obligation happens (*Il arrive*). Moreover, most often, obligation happens in the midst of disasters. Obligation is sparked by the face of the other (although we do not know if it indeed *comes* from the other), then lays hold of us, and calls us to act.

According to Caputo, obligation occurs spontaneously without our consent. It binds us in its hold and its call to action. It is a scandal to ethics' freedom of analysis. Obligation does not allow one the freedom to analyze the situation and come to the best solution or the good solution from some source on high. Thus, obligation presents the beginnings of the deconstruction of ethics. "Ethics," writes Caputo, "would just as soon keep this or any other scandal, any stumbling block to reason and intelligibility, at a safe remove" (1993:7). Ethics cannot contain obligation because obligation happens spontaneously, leaving one no freedom to decide whether or not to be obliged. One must decide whether or not to obey the obligation, but the obligation does not derive from a transcendental metanarrative that explains factual reality. Caputo maintains that those who rely on transcendental principles to provide a map for safe and respon-

sible action find obligation the devious enemy of ethics. In time, however, they will come to see that "ethics, which is philosophy, and philosophy, which is Greek, cannot abide this much alienation and deappropriation, this much *Unheimlichkeit*" (Caputo 1993:13).

Caputo argues that we have been abandoned by Being and must abandon transcendental principles; instead, we must attach ourselves to beings, to specific beings, to proper names. He latches on "to everything that Being quits, to everything Being leaves behind, all its remnants and leftovers, the jewgreek fragments that played no part in the First Beginning; that cannot get a reservation for the Other Beginning" (Caputo 1993:69). Obligation happens, and can only happen, when both the addresser and the addressee have proper names. The other (the thou) must have a name.

This emphasis on proper names means that one must always talk about a specific person, a specific date, or a specific disaster. It prevents one from trying to rise above the fray of the world and speak in generalities; it prohibits finding larger meaning in the suffering of an individual. Beings suffer, feel, cry, and laugh. Being does none of the above, because: "Being cannot suffer a disaster, or suffer oblivion, because it does not suffer at all. Being and Spirit are mytho-super-Subjects, the upshot of totalizing attempts to describe what is happening, which end up abandoning what is happening, leaving those of us with proper names to face the worst" (Caputo 1993:70). Being has no proper name. Caputo claims that if he were to write a book of history it would be nothing but proper names. He argues that the Vietnam War Memorial (listing the proper name of each victim of this particular war, with the proper name Vietnam, and the dates 1964–1975) is a better commentary on war than any paper, speech, or treatise. An individual with a proper name is the only "thing" that exists and that makes obligation happen. Anything conceptual or ethical that speaks other than in proper names leaves the individual in the dust.

Proper names further facilitate the deconstruction of ethics, for "ethics abhors the abyss of singularity" (Caputo 1993:14). Caputo claims that philosophy and theology, of which ethics is a part, are always trying to find the principles that explain the individual. According to Caputo, the search for such all-powerful principles is futile, because factual reality always shows that the individual is there first; the individual and the obligation always arrive before the principle. This means that the principle can only be defined by the individual, in which case the principle is of no use.

"Like a man who has swallowed something he cannot digest," writes Caputo, "metaphysics suffers the systematic misfortune of containing what it cannot contain, of harboring what it cannot protect (e.g., obligations, individuals)" (1993:73). This puts ethics in a bind, because "the idea behind ethics is to have something to say about the particular choices and particular situations in which individuals find themselves" (Caputo 1993:73). Caputo argues that because ethics works from principles, the individual who does not conform to these principles falls through the cracks. Hence, ethics is its own undoing, wanting to speak always of the individual, yet not being able to contain the individual. Ethics, therefore, loses that which its purpose is to hold.

Obligation, Justice, and Law

Caputo begins his discussion of justice with a surprising statement from Jacques Derrida: "Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructable. No more than deconstruction, if such a thing exists. Deconstruction is justice" (1993:86). Caputo, anticipating the objection of those familiar with deconstructionism, asks on behalf of the reader:

> "Undeconstructable justice?" What is that if not another tall tale, another *grand récit,* another classic to contend with, more authority, more rabbis and black-robed judges all over the place? What is that if not the return of the transcendental signified, of being-in-itself, of pure presence, or the *fundamentum inconcussum,* of God, or worse, of Plato? (1993:87).

Surprisingly, however, Caputo defends Derrida's statement and incorporates "undeconstructable justice" into his description of a poetics of obligation, along with proper names, disasters, and *es gibt.*

Justice, he claims, is anything but another *grand récit;* it is not a principle that is above the law, nor one that informs the law. Justice is not too big to be deconstructed, it is, rather, so small as to be apart from the law. It is the deconstruction of the law itself. "Deconstruction," writes Caputo, "situates itself in the distance between the large, honorable, hoary inscriptions of the law and little proper names, which are but little bits of things, what Johannes Climacus called a fragment (*Smule*)—ineffable and invis-

ible (almost)" (1993:87). Deconstruction as justice functions as a corrective to the law by always pointing out those individuals with proper names whom the law neglects.

The law, like ethics, must be general. It must be able to establish general principles that will cover the greatest number of people. If the law were to focus on proper names, then the law would never be written. According to Caputo, the goal of the law is to provide security and order for public life. It is popular to say that law insures justice; Caputo, however, argues that this is not the case, because the law is blind to the individual—to proper names. He claims that "when the law is too blind, more blind than it has to be, too veiled in ignorance, too inflexible, when the columns of justice will not give at all, then the individual is shit" (Caputo 1993:90). Justice, therefore, cannot be a new *grand récit*, but rather is its perfect enemy, "because justice in itself consorts with mud and dirt and shit, with little shards and fragments, for which it would be scandalous to say that there are forms, unless it be the form of difference" (Caputo 1993:90).

Thus, justice becomes an essential component of the poetics of obligation. It works below the law, below ethics, below any *grand récit,* always pointing out where these artificial hortatory systems fail to do what they set out to do. Justice, for Caputo, is found in the face of the child with AIDS, who causes one to feel obliged. Justice affirms the "impossible possibility"; it is not here, yet it will come: "Justice delayed is justice denied but justice promised is justice coming" (Caputo 1993:92). Justice is not, however, a program, a system of laws, a metanarrative that defines action; rather, justice is obligation that strikes one from the eyes of a suffering child. It deals only with proper names and only with disasters. Caputo asks only that planners of programs and laws "remember justice, that is, what the program leaves out, that they remember the proper names of the disasters, which is a dangerous memory" (1993:92).

While Caputo is against ethics, he is not against laws. Although laws always fall short of justice, laws are necessary to insure at least some form of acceptable common life. Laws, however, are different from ethics. Whereas laws seek the least common denominator for preventing illegal human action, ethics seeks to provide a system for prescribing human action. Caputo admits that societies need laws, but he is uncompromising in his assertion that individuals do not need ethics. Unlike individuals, a society does not have a proper name, it cannot be addressed, and it can-

not address another. For these reasons, a society needs laws. An individual with a proper name, however, is susceptible to obligation, can be moved by the disaster of another, and can interact with other individuals as an individual. Against ethics' ability to provide justice, Caputo writes:

> If someone really demands a principle or a foundation, if they want a cognitive basis, a theory, or a principle, before proceeding, they will, I fear, never get underway. If they say that, failing such a principle, they will not act or will not act well, then I fear the worst. The sphere of obligation is its own form of life, its own genre, its own justification. That does not mean it is self-evident *(per se nota),* written in the stars, but rather that it is on its own to make the best case it can for itself (1993:38–39).

Admitting that a society needs laws does not give ethics a foothold inside of Caputo's world of deconstruction and obligation. Laws, unlike ethics, do not attempt the impossible, because they do not impose the unreal upon the real.

Judgement and Resistance
More Metaphyscial Indigeston

Judgement requires analysis; to make a decision one must ask: What is happening? For Caputo, "what happens *(qui arrive, was geschieht)* is called an event" (1993:93). The problem with trying to judge an event, Caputo claims, is that we cannot rise above it. It simply happens (*il arrive*). Events happen, we are present, and "because of their complexity, events cannot be fully fathomed or analyzed, but only inhabited, settled into, coped with" (Caputo 1993:94). An event is concrete and singular, it is new and different from anything anyone has experienced before, hence, each event is unique. Here Caputo admits that he cannot fully escape metaphysics. While he would like to maintain the utter and total singularity of an event, he recognizes that no event is so unique to our experience that it is unrecognizable. We do have some limited frame of reference to interpret (in an extremely restricted way) what is happening.

But how does one act? What does one do? Caputo replies that the answer to these questions are tied to the event. The poet of obligation seeks "to become the subject of obligation, the subject to which obligation hap-

pens" (Caputo 1993:96). One acts based upon the confronting obligations. One inhabits the situation, opens one's self to obligation, and chooses how to act. According to Caputo, this is essentially different than applying principles or ethical foundations.

Caputo argues that "principles, universals, laws are attempts on the part of thought to penetrate the density of events, to find the secret formula of events, to provide guardrails that safeguard the subject through the most treacherous twists and turns that events take" (Caputo 1993:96). The problem for ethics is that obligation is not safe, and events are far too dense to be predicted. The ethicist is looking for principles to apply to events, but how is this possible? Caputo wonders how we could ever agree on what those principles might be. Moreover, even if a set of agreed upon principles could be developed, the singularity of events would make their application impossible. As with obligations and individuals, the event always precedes the principle. One is in the event before one knows what principles to apply. He argues that in the moment of actual decision, ethics fails. "Metaphysical ethics," writes Caputo, "founders on judgments as it founders on proper names and obligations. It harbors a doctrine of judgment that it cannot contain. Judgments are one more bit metaphysics has swallowed but cannot digest; more metaphysical indigestion" (1993:97).

Caputo is clear that the poetics of obligation, and the tenets of deconstruction, should not be misunderstood to advocate inaction. He argues that it is a "misguided distortion" to assume that a poetics of obligation "leads to absolute pacifism and to letting oneself or others become a victim or a hostage or a slave in a socio-economic or political sense" (Caputo 1993:118). Obligation does not deny the importance of action; it only refuses to (or more correctly, acknowledges its inability to) give foundational reasons for actions that are based upon metaphysical principles with no factual reality. The poetics of obligation asks one to live fully in the event, make a decision, and act.

To illustrate living, deciding, and acting, Caputo speaks of resistance and forgiveness. He cites the March 18, 1980 murder of "Miguel, who was 1 year old; Anibal, who was 5; Santa Ana, who was 9; Marina, who was 13; and their father, Juan Hernandez" (Caputo 1993:117). Note that he speaks of a specific disaster (an event with a place and a date) and of victims with proper names. In this particular case, he objects to those who would say forgiveness is needed for healing. This situation calls for resistance. The obligation presented by the victims with personal names is to

resist. Why? Because that is the obligation. Caputo claims that the names of the children are the names of justice, and nothing can acknowledge the names of justice more than resistance. Obligation calls one to resist the military that destroys, the capitalists that exploit, and the government that oppresses. Resistance will take the form appropriate to a specific person in a specific event who finds herself obliged.

Caputo is adamant that one not ask him how resistance should happen or what form it should take. He claims there are no foundational principles to apply. There is only obligation. Obligation happens (*es gibt*). From where? Who knows, who cares. For what? Who knows, who cares. Such questions are unanswerable and do not help resist future killings of Miguel (who was 1), Anibal (who was 5), Santa Ana (who was 9), Marina (who was 13), and their father, Juan Hernandez. Disasters happen; obligation happens (*es gibt*); resistance is required.

As in his other well-known text, *Radical Hermeneutics,* Caputo argues for a radical anarchy.[1] He states:

> "God" is not the "apex of my vocabulary," something which would organize and stabilize my vocabulary, but another word that puzzles and disturbs my sleep. I am pursued by a more radical anarchy than Levinas's, one without an apex or a deep, founding, preoriginary ethics from which science and law and politics and institutional life can be derived and secured and can draw breath (Caputo 1993:226).

He does not propose an anarchy that leads to inaction, but rather an anarchy derived from the great multiplicity of singular individuals with proper names deciding in their singular events which of their numerous obligations to follow. Moreover, even obligation has no sacred or protected pedestal. Obligation "has its own credentials, but is without ultimate authorization, since who would have the authority to authorize it?" (Caputo 1993:39) Obligation happens; this is all he will say, and even this is fleeting. Denying himself the last remnant of solid ground, Caputo writes:

> We pass our days on the surface of a little star which drifts aimlessly through endless skies, inventing such fictions as we require to make

[1] John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

> it through the day and to persuade ourselves of our meaning and significance. Until at last, weary of its peculiar little local experiment, the cosmos draws another breath and moves on. Then we disappear without a trace. "Knowledge," "obligation," "justice"—these are so many obsolete inventions of the little animals, now useless vapors dissipating in interstellar space (1993:17).

While he claims that obligation simply happens *(es gibt)*, he remains consistent in denying it any transcendental or eternal meaning.

Nonetheless, he argues that obligation is truer to factual life than is ethics, which is philosophy. Philosophers and ethicists miss the disasters, and they forget proper names. They know only healthy people and good situations. They soar above disasters like educated eagles seeking places to lay their eggs of principle. They cannot help you, because they do not understand.

Obligation happens. Caputo does not know from where it comes; he does not know why. He knows only that it happens. Ethics, he claims, seeks something beyond what happens. It seeks some meaning to why things are the way they are. It asks questions it cannot answer, and in the process, it misses obligation and ignores proper names. "Obligation," he writes, "proceeds on the assumption that what happens is all there is, that there is nothing to legitimate the destruction of what happens, so that the role of obligation is to help restore the joy to what happens, to make exultation possible, or possible again" (Caputo 1993:236). Only in confrontation with the real world of proper names and events is it possible to survive the moment of decision.

LOSING ONE'S STAR: POSTMODERNITY'S MALAISE

As I stated in the introduction, I assume in this essay that scholarship is done today in a postmodern culture. As David Harvey rightly notes, postmodernism plays "a crucial role in defining the trajectory of social and political development simply by virtue of the way it define[s] standards of social critique and political practice. In recent years it has determined the standards of debate, defined the manner of 'discourse,' and set parameters on cultural, political, and intellectual criticism" (Harvey 1990:viii). While scholars differ in their definitions of postmodernism and in their

proposed responses to it, it is clear that its challenges cannot be simply ignored.[2]

Postmodernism, as a critique of modernity, rejects claims that "objective, true scientific knowledge is grounded in empirical facts that are uninterpreted, indubitable, and fixed in meaning," and is suspicious of "theories that are derived from these facts by induction or deduction and are accepted and rejected solely on their ability to survive objective experimentation" (van Huyssteen 1997:267). Postmodernists as a group generally share a set of critiques of, and challenges to, modernist rationality. On the one hand, postmodern critiques of rationality generally involve the rejection of essentialism and foundationalism,[3] the rejection of universal metanarratives, *grand récits*, or "overtones of metaphysical continuity" in history (Byrne 1992:335). On the other hand, postmodern critiques of rationality also tend to reject the notion that only "objective evidence" related to the "mechanics of the world" is valid in rational discourse, calling instead for a "more comprehensive understanding of the world" that includes subjective and moral dimensions of life (Rossouw 1993:895,897, 899). Moreover, postmodern scholars tend to argue for radical, concrete contextuality, for the realization that all data—and hence all theories derived from such data—are value laden, and for the acceptance that all knowledge is experienced and interpreted through a socially conditioned hermeneutical process.

[2] Postmodernism is a vast and evolving cultural phenomenon. Any attempt to definitively describe what postmodernity *is* will crash on the rocks of postmodernity itself. One can, however, suggest some general challenges posed by postmodernity and then contextulalize these challenges to one's specific discipline or field of inquiry.

[3] According to J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, foundationalism "is the thesis that our beliefs can be justified by appealing to some item or knowledge that is self-evident or indubitable. Foundationalism in this epistemological sense therefore always implies holding a position inflexibly and infallibly, because in the process of justifying our knowledge-claims, we are able to invoke ultimate foundations on which we construct the evidential support systems of our various convictional beliefs" (van Huyssteen 1997:2–3). In the Christian tradition, foundationalism is most commonly seen in the reliance upon "sola scriptura" as the source for the ultimate, true, ahistorical, self-revelation of God as the end-point argument for all doctrines and beliefs.

A general distinction that one can make within postmodernism is between constructive and deconstructive postmodernists, or affirmative and skeptical postmodernists. The affirmative or constructive postmodernist offers constructive suggestions derived from a postmodern paradigm. According to van Huyssteen, affirmative postmodernists, although they severely critique modernity, have a "hopeful and optimistic view of the postmodern age. This kind of postmodernism is open to positive political action and the making of responsible normative choices, and seeks an intellectual practice that is nondogmatic, nonideological and tentative" (van Huyssteen 1997:270). Constructive postmodernism accepts that we live in an age of transition from objective knowledge, universal absolutes, and foundational philosophies, yet seeks to be original, creative, and constructive in meeting these self-imposed philosophical and methodological challenges.[4]

The second type of postmodernism, deconstructive or skeptical postmodernism, "is the dark side of postmodernism, and offers a pessimistic negative, gloomy assessment by arguing that the postmodern age, in its complete break with modernity, is an age of only fragmentation, disintegration, and meaninglessness, with a vague or even absence of moral parameters, a postmodernism of despair" (van Huyssteen 1997:269). This brief discussion of postmodernism provides a framework for interpreting Caputo's work.

I contend that Caputo's work stands as an exemplar of skeptical postmodernism. Caputo claims that life is a disaster and that "to suffer a disaster is to lose one's star (*dis-astrum*), to be cut loose from one's lucky

[4] For an example of what I claim as a powerful work of constructive postmodernism see Wendy Farley's *Eros for the Other: Retaining Truth in a Pluralistic World* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996). In this work Farley argues that one is not forced to choose between the absolutism of fundamentalism or the relativism of postmodernism; both of these options distort truth. Farley accepts the postmodern insistence that difference be valued and accepted and that all forms of totalizing knowledge be resisted. Nevertheless, she rejects the claim that valuing difference leads to a rejection of truth and a relativizing of evil. Rather, she maintains that there is a distinction between multiplicity and falsehood; the former recognizes human diversity, the latter dehumanizes and destroys. On this basis, Farley argues that truth and ethical passion arise in our relationships with human beings, as an *eros* for others.

or guiding light" (1993:6). Consistent with postmodernism of this type, Caputo argues that deconstruction of modernist rationality "is not a question of knowing what to put in its place, but of just getting along without such a place, of conceding that things are just 'decentered,' 'disseminated,' 'disastered'" (1993:6). Skeptical postmodernism, in my opinion, successfully tears down one's house, yet, by refusing to rebuild in its place, leaves one homeless and in the cold.

It is the type of skeptical postmodernism exhibited by Caputo that David Harvey claims "swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is" (Harvey 1990:44). I contend that Caputo stands with and exemplifies those skeptical postmodernists who are so "obsessed with deconstructing and delegitimating every form of argument they encounter, they can end only in condemning their own validity claims to the point where nothing remains of any basis for reasoned action" (Harvey 1990:116). As I argue below, not only are Caputo's criticisms of ethics overstated, but his position is in the end (from an ethical standpoint) *potentially* blinding and dangerous.

What Obligation, Whose Justice?

Caputo is trapped in his postmodern and deconstructionist world. He does not simply use deconstruction as a method, but so accepts its validity as a methodology that he is denied the ability to offer a constructive alternative once ethics and philosophy have been deconstructed. He cannot give adequate content to his idea that deconstruction is justice because any content that he would give to the term justice is itself open to being deconstructed. He does not even do justice to Derrida, who himself does not allow for the destruction of all forms of truth. Once Caputo's deconstruction is complete, he can only offer a hollow description of an inadequate counter-proposal.

Caputo's claim that obligation simply happens (*es gibt*) is difficult to accept and forms the primary weakness of his "poetics of obligation." The notion is not hard to accept because of ethics' supposed inability to digest alienation or deappropriation, nor ethics' supposed quest to look beyond what is happening and therefore miss what is really happening. On the contrary, it seems self-evident that simply by looking at *what is* (as opposed to Caputo's nemesis of *what ought to be*), one can see that obligation does not merely happen and certainly not in any universal form.

Caputo consistently speaks of the face of a child, of a dying young girl, as a catalyst for (though not necessarily cause of) obligation. While this image appeals to the emotions of many (I remember the power of Steven Spielberg's little girl in red in the midst of the black and white *Schindler's List*), I can also draw to mind horrific images of those who seem not to feel any obligation in the face of a suffering child. These images include those who batter children, neglect children, or even throw unwanted newborns into trash dumpsters. To return to the *Schindler's List* example, the compelling image of the little girl in red is last seen dead in a heap of exterminated bodies. Where was obligation?

Furthermore, even if I were to grant the validity that obligation simply happens, I am left wondering what stops such an idea from degenerating into a purely individualistic ethics?[5] How, under Caputo's theory, are we to feel any sense of obligation to dying children, starving persons, mistreated prisoners, innocent victims of war, or any others who do not suffer in *our* presence? While I reject an ethic that seeks a "view from nowhere" or a "view from everywhere" (Bordo 1990:143) which completely misses individual disasters and persons with proper names, if I abandon any notion of a wider coherent ethics and politics (as Caputo seems to suggest) in favor of simply a description of specific events, then I can only speak of *my* obligation to those people I encounter in *my* life. In short, I am left with nothing but abstract individualism. Whatever the rest of the world does, I cannot speak beyond myself. This inability to feel obligation beyond what one can actually experience "flee[s] from the seriousness of suffering and responsibility" (Farley 1996:135).

I acknowledge that Caputo's flight from responsibility is not intended. He states clearly that one is mistaken to claim that a poetics of obligation calls for inaction; rather, in many cases resistance is called for. There is undeniable value in his warning that our principles can blind us to the real persons whom the principles seek to protect. When Caputo offers his notion of resistance, and bases it on justice and obligation, one hopes to find how obligation is made concrete. Resistance, he claims, is crucial, for without it "the rights of women and of homosexuals will succumb to

[5] For feminist arguments that postmodernism can result in a nominalist ontology and an individualist politics see Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticisms," and Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" Both essays appear in *Feminism/Postmodernism,* ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990).

bio-power, to fundamentalists, to all those who want to inscribe their private views of the Good on everyone else's bodies, and to cut off the right to be different (not to mention what else they would like to cut off)" (1993:121). At this point one searches for an ethical content to his poetics, a real and concrete theory for how justice, obligation, and action come together.

Unfortunately, Caputo can give no such guidelines for how, when, why, or in what form resistance should manifest itself. He claims that the loss of his star deprives him of theoretical standpoints. He cannot explain or prescribe; he offers only description. Within a few pages, Caputo states that resistance is necessary, yet fails to say why. He claims that the best form of resistance is non-violent, yet refuses to explain why and also claims that non-violence is often inadequate. He claims that resistance is intrinsic to his poetics of obligation, yet argues that he cannot give any direction for how or why one should resist. What is important, he insists, is that oppression demands resistance. But he will not, indeed cannot, say how one should resist, or why one should resist, or what one should resist. The best he can say is that "resistance takes many forms and can be very inventive" (1993:120). This, however, is not enough. His notion of resistance, which at first seemed to provide the possible light for action, ends up hollow, devoid of any prescriptive content.

A call for action without any notion of what action is needed, or why action is being called for, is little better than no call for action at all. Thus, despite its best intentions, Caputo's deconstructionism deprives the oppressed and exploited the very moral ground they need to stand on. Caputo refuses to give any theoretical reasons or grounding for ethical or political judgment. Reasons for forgiveness or action are given by ethics, and Caputo views all ethics with suspicion. Despite his best intentions, Caputo's deconstructionism is guilty of the "restless skepticism toward logical consistency and theoretical coherence," which Cornel West claims "may be symptomatic of the relative political impotence of marginal peoples" (West 1989:236). In other words, Caputo denies the oppressed the precise arguments and foundations needed for meaningful participation in purposeful expressions of resistance.

There are many elements of the supposedly postmodern critique that can be launched and accepted by scholars who refuse to take the slippery slope. One can pay attention to historical context, to the value-laden nature of theory, and to the problems of totalization and essentialism, with-

out abandoning the notion of theory. One can look at proper names and disasters with dates and places and names without succumbing to the too easy temptation to refuse to see beyond the blinders of an ontology of abstract individualism, which can result in silence in the face of oppression.

Whose Ethics?

In turning from the implications of Caputo's deconstructive postmodernism to his criticisms of ethics as a discipline I encounter equally troubling themes. The ethics that Caputo discusses are too monolithic and too homogeneous. There were points in his text where I did not recognize the "ethics" being critiqued. The ethics against which he stands appears to be an ethic of universal and absolute principles that is formulated with no regard to the human condition and applied through a system of legalistic casuistry with little attention to contextual discernment. In a discussion of contemporary ethics this is a straw-opponent *par excellence.*

In reading Caputo's discussion of the near universal tendency of ethics to "soar above factual life like an eagle," in contrast to his own position "from below," I was immediately reminded of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Almost seventy years ago, Bonhoeffer claimed that "any attempt to lay down [moral] principles is like trying to draw a bird in flight" (Bonhoeffer 1929:40). Bonhoeffer further argued that "there is ethics only on the completion of the act, not in the letter of the law" (1929:45). For many Christian ethicists, the will of God in any given situation cannot be discerned in advance of the situation in which the decision must be made. The "concrete conditions" of the situation form the framework for helping the Christian determine what course of action is most appropriate (that is, acting in accordance with the will of God) at that given moment. One cannot simply respond to a formless and content-less notion of obligation.

Furthermore, when Caputo argues against ethics' supposed task of finding a larger meaning in the suffering of an individual, and his claim that Being (that is, God) does not suffer, feel, cry, or laugh, I again wonder against whom he is fighting. Many contemporary ethicists would argue that one who first looks for meaning in the suffering of the other actually contributes to that suffering. Stanley Hauerwas has powerfully argued that we exist with those who are suffering as a suffering presence, and, in fact, it is in that capacity that Christ often

exists with us.[6] Moreover, Caputo misses those like James Cone who applaud the notion that evil must first be resisted rather than explained.[7] And, in an amazing parallel of terms and concepts, Caputo's claim that justice is an "impossible possibility" resonates with Reinhold Niebuhr's reference to the human quest for self-sacrificial love as an "impossible possibility," which acts as both an indiscriminate judgment on all action and a discriminating means of judgment to help decide between specific actions.[8]

My point is not that Caputo is advancing the same argument as the above mentioned ethicists. My point is, rather, that it is unclear exactly whose ethics Caputo is against. There are still those ethicists who in some form or another are guilty of many of Caputo's specific charges, and Caputo successfully shows the inherent weaknesses of such positions. This type of ethics is not, however, representative of the field and certainly does not invalidate the discipline.

Conclusion

For a Christian ethicist, the lack of any guiding metanarrative (even in a tentative and non-absolute form) is hard to imagine. The paradigm of Jesus' life, or the work of the Holy Spirit of God, or God's faithfulness to Israel—any of these, or some other image—may prove meaningful to the religious ethicist. For many ethicists working in the Christian tradition, it is legitimate to appeal to faith in biblical concepts of justice, love, and responsible life. Caputo's insistence that we are merely floating on a far away star with no one who cares, were it true, would indeed present a stumbling block to many Christian ethicists. Caputo's Disaster (singular and capitalized) however, represents not only a terrible and frightening place

[6] Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped, and the Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986).

[7] See, for example, James H. Cone, *Black Theology & Black Power* (New York: The Searbury Press, 1969), and *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970).

[8] See Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), vol. II, and "Why the Church is Not Pacifist," in *Christianity and Power Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).

to be, yet it too can represent a very safe and isolated place to be, one strangely indicative of a first-world, upper-middle class *malaise*.

I do not, however, leave Caputo's text only with disappointment. His criticisms do have the benefit of challenging any notions that limit multiple forms of otherness or that claim the ability to lay an absolute and totalizing claim to truth and goodness. Those who spend so much energy discerning right action—devoid of attention to goals and consequences and proper names—should heed his warnings of the blinding effects of principles. While I think his proposal is ultimately unsuccessful, I share Wendy Farley's admiration of Caputo's attempt to "extract an ethics from postmodernism" (1996:134). I freely admit that he does not simply decide to stand by passively even in the face of suffering. I do not intend to claim that his particular formulation of obligation is in itself immoral or dangerous. Nevertheless, I cannot look past the larger implications that *can* grow from such a largely contentless position.

Caputo's work can serve as a useful warning. He claims that his "interest lies with people so exposed to the abyss by which events are inhabited that they cannot get as far as ordinary life and its ordinary joys and sorrows" (1993:235). He argues powerfully that ethics too often has little to say to those in such a position. While I cannot accept his poetics of obligation, I take it as a personal challenge and warning not to accept or formulate any ethic that forgets or ignores proper names, disasters, events, dates, and people who do not even reach "ordinary" life. If ethics does not speak to those seeking "ordinary life," then what is its purpose? We are richer for hearing such warnings and critiques and should keep them constantly in mind as we go about our task.

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Toward Cuban Reconciliation
An *Ajiaco* Philosophical Foundation

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"Banana wine, even if it turns out bitter, is still our wine."
José Martí: the father of Cuba's struggle for independence

THERE ARE TWO CUBAS. ON THE ISLAND ARE THE REVOLUTIONARIES, CRUSADING to construct a Cuba that combats any attempt to subjugate her spirit to the hegemony of the United States. On the (main)land are the modernists who look to the United States as the guide for revitalizing a Post-Castro Cuba. Due to fundamental political and economic differences, we Cubans are a people divided against ourselves.[1] We look beyond each other for our mentors because we do not know how to look at ourselves.

[1] The term "Cuban-American", which refers to Cubans residing in the United States, is an artificial designation that amalgamates "who we are" with "where we live." This is the name given to us by the dominant culture, not a name given by ourselves. When we talk among ourselves, we seldom use the word "Cuban-American" to refer to our being. The act of uttering a word that names us simultaneously subordinates us to the power of the one doing the naming. The group doing the naming reveals a vested, presupposed authority endowed through power relations and recognized by us, the Other. The word "Cuban-American" constructs us as an object for the dominant culture to possess and shrouds us in the very act of appropriation. This phenomenon is described by what Bourdieu calls objectivism: "Objectivism constitutes the social world as a spectacle presented to an observer who takes up a 'point of view' on the action, who stands back so as to observe it, and, transferring into the object the principle of his relation to the object, conceives of it as a totality intended for cognition alone, in which all interactions are reduced to symbolic exchanges. This point of view is the one afforded by high positions in the social structure" (1977: 96). The term "Cuban-American" creates a hyphenated identity that attempts to reconcile two distinct and separate cultures into one being. Thus, this locution erects within our very being a schizophrenic (Latin for "split

This article will look within our own Cuban cultural legacy to construct an *ajiaco* Christian philosophy. An *ajiaco* Christianity is philosophically based on the diversity of our Cuban roots. It attempts to de-center the divisiveness that Eurocentric modernity has imposed on us and approaches our double mindedness from within the philosophical contributions made by the Spaniards Miguel de Unamuno and José Ortega y Gasset. Instead of relying on science to construct our philosophy we begin, like our philosophers, with a deep awareness of mortality. Death and self-negation become the starting point for Exilic Cubans such as myself for reconceptualizing "salvation." For this *ajiaco* Christianity to be viable it must become a second act, a reflection of our praxis, specifically a praxis leading toward reconciliation among all Cubans. The ultimate praxis of reconciliation will be found in the sacred space of Christ, who like us, is Cuban, a crucified man.

ROOTS OF AN *AJIACO* PHILOSOPHY

Ajiaco is a Cuban stew consisting of different indigenous roots. A native dish, it symbolizes who we are as a people, and how our diverse ethnic backgrounds came to be formed. The Amerindians gave us the *maíz*, *papa*, *malanga*, *boniato*, *yuca*, and *ají*. The Spaniards added *calabaza* and *nabo*, while the Chinese added Oriental spices. Africans, contributing *ñame* and with their culinary foretaste, urged a meaning from this froth beyond the

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mind") existence. We realize that as "Cuban-Americans" we are too Cuban to be accepted by this country, and too Americanized to be accepted by our native co-patriots. Besides, the term Cuban-American is redundant, for Cuba is one of the countries located in the Americas; hence all Cubans are by definition Americans. Because one country appropriates the name of the entire Western Hemisphere, all Others dwelling in that country are forced to abide under the dominant gaze which relegates us to a hyphenated existence. Because self-naming is a powerful liberating praxis, Cubans will be defined as all individuals who were either born in Cuba (regardless as to where they live), or those born on foreign land but who culturally remain Cubans. Resident Cubans will refer to those who are currently inhabiting the Island of Cuba, while Exilic Cubans will refer to those of the *Diaspora* who reside mainly within the United States (specifically Miami, Florida, but also those who made their homes in other countries like Spain, Mexico, Venezuela, and the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico).

necessity of clever cooking. We are "a *mestizaje* of kitchens, a *mestizaje* of races, a *mestizaje* of cultures, a dense broth of civilization that bubbles on the stove of the Caribbean" (Ortiz 1940:165). In effect, we eat and are nourished by the combination of all of our diverse roots. Fernando Ortiz was the first to use *ajiaco* as a metaphor for the Cuban experience. He used this term within the context of a Cuba that was a country of immigrants who, unlike those coming to the United States, reached the Island on the way to some place else (1940:165–69). Rather than pointing to the immigrants, I use this term to refer to the distinctive nexus of our people's roots, specifically our Amerindian, African, Spanish, Asian and Anglo roots. *Ajiaco* symbolizes our *cubanidad's* attempt to find harmony within our diversity, as it aspires to create Martí's idealized state of a secularized vision of Christian love which is anti-imperialistic, anti-militant, anti-racist, moral and radical. Our *ajiaco* is and should be unapologetically our own authentic reality, our *locus theologicus*, from where we Cubans approach the wider world.

Most Latina/o theologians use the term "Mulatto" and/or "Mestizo Christianity" to describe the Hispanic Christian perspective. Mulatto connotes a mixture of Spaniard and African stock and refers to a racial mixture which is common in the Caribbean. However, mulatto is also a racist term due to its association with the word "mule." Etymologically, *mulato* is believed to be a derivative from the Arabic *mulwállad* (pronounced *muélled*). *Mulwállad* is defined as "one born of an Arab father and a foreign mother"; a possible passive participle of the second conjugation of *wálada*, "he begot." However, *mulato* literally "mule, young or without domesticity," was influenced in form by a folk-etymological association with the Spanish word *mulo*, "mule" from the Latin *mulus*. Adding the diminutive suffix '-at' to the word *mulo* creates a general hybrid comparison. Dozy's monumental work on the Arabic language maintains that the word *mulato* is actually a Portuguese word of contempt which signifies' mule (1967:839–41). Even if Cubans fail to make a connection between the word mule and mulatto, African Americans make such a connection and find the association offensive. We construct our ethical perspective within the United States location, therefore, sensitivity toward the United States element of our *ajiaco* should also be observed.

Additionally, a mule is the product of a horse and donkey and is unable to reproduce itself. This negative connotation found in the word mule carries over to the word "mulatto," regardless of the efforts made to con-

struct a positive definition. Contrary to the mule's sterility, any Christianity constructed from the Cuban perspective requires fecundity. As a child, I still recall that whenever my mother made an *ajiaco* she would comment on its hearty qualities by stating, "*Hice un ajiaco que levanta los muertos*" (I made an *ajiaco* that can raise the dead). *Ajiaco,* the collection of our diverse roots, becomes a life-giving substance, something that can raise the dead (in life).

True, it is the intention of Latino/a theologians to use the word "mulatto" to indicate the positive mixture of races and cultures which create what Vasconcelos termed, *la nueva raza cósmica* (the new cosmic race).[2] But "mulatto" contains so many negative connotations that it detracts from properly defining our work. Furthermore, it fails to adequately encompass who we are as Cubans. Our roots contain more elements than just Mulatto (black and white) or Mestizo (Amerindian and Spaniard). We are also Asian,[3] and due to our Exile, also European. We Cubans are heirs of Taino indigenous culture, of Medieval Catholic Spain, of Africa (primarily Yorubaland), and of Asia (specifically the Canton province of China). Due to our continuing presence in the United States, our heritage now includes a Eurocentric Protestant tradition as well. We are most truly a multi-cultural people, belonging to five cultural inheritances, yet fully accepted by none of them, which makes us simultaneously "outsiders" and "insiders" on all sides. We find the blood of conquerors and conquered converging in our veins. It is from this existential space that we must construct the philosophical bases upon which we Cubans can reconcile our several selves to our "self."

[2] José Vasconcelos (1882-1959), the Mexican philosopher and statesman is credited with constructing the utopian concept of The Cosmic Race as a way of combating the prevalent positivism of his time which advocated the destruction of Mexican culture because of the belief in the evolutionary superiority of Anglos. While we celebrate the defense of Latin American culture over against Eurocentrism, we need to recognize that philosophers like Vasconcelos still upheld positivism's hierarchical view on race.

[3] Just as a middle passage existed across the Atlantic, for Cubans there also existed one across the Pacific. To meet the sugar industry's need for laborers after the abolition of slavery, Cubans imported Chinese to replace the emancipated blacks. Although these Chinese were not official slaves, their journey to our Island and their existence on Cuban soil were similar to the experience of Africans.

DE-CENTERING EUROCENTRIC MODERNITY

Many Exilic Cubans, especially YUCAS, see their exilic experience as positive due to their individual economic advancements when compared to other Latina/o groups.[4] Other Hispanics' economic failure in this country is attributed to their refusal to adopt North American mores and their supposed inferiority to Cubans. Hence, the U.S. social milieu has successfully penetrated our own consciousness, so that North Atlantic culture has become the utopia toward which we strive. Most YUCAS automatically assume that the woes of Cuba can be easily remedied by way of the assimilation, if not annexation, to the (main)land.

"On what philosophical foundation should a Cuban-style Christianity be based?" is a debate which is not occurring among Exilic Cubans. Here is my claim. The United States is not the intellectual savior of Cubans. The collapse of communism in Europe in 1989 does not mean that the United States and its capitalist free market is the only possible paradigm available to us.[5] Most Exilic Cubans subscribe to what I will argue is an Ortega paradigm, which is looking to North America to revitalize our thought. This causes Exilic Cubans to envision a post-Castro Cuba as a cultural extension of the United States.

The necessary process of constructing our own Cuban philosophical space begins with the realization that European modernity is, from its inception, hostile to our existential being, specifically to our African, Amerindian, Asian, and Spanish roots. This hostility is caused by the imposition of the center's thought upon the periphery a thought which masks domination while justifying exploitation. Hence, our approach to moder-

[4] Yucca is a indigenous Cuban root, often tall and stout-stemmed, that is served boiled or fried as a standard part of most Cuban meals. Although yucca has a brown exterior, it is white on the inside. Cubans eat yucca as frequently as North Americans eat potatoes. Hispanic sociologists have used the word YUCA to stand for Young Upwardly-mobile Cuban Americans. Typically, this individual is first or second generation, middle to upper economic class, between 25 and 45 years of age, and educated in North American schools.

[5] It is interesting to note that the 1959 Cuban Revolution served as a new narrative for capitalist Latin American modernity. However, due to the United States attempt to maintain its position of regional hegemony, this new narrative failed when the Revolution was forced to submit to a Soviet Union model of modernity for its economic and political survival.

nity should adhere to what I will argue is not Ortega's vision, but Unamuno's paradigm of resistance over against acceptance.

Modernity is an ethos (a moral character). It is a choice made by Central Europeans to construct a relation of belonging that determines how this group will think, feel, act, and behave toward the Other (Foucault 39). As a product of the so-called Age of Enlightenment, modernity is and always will be a Eurocentric phenomenon. It is a phenomenon which excludes the periphery, where we Cubans are situated, and therefore it forces our supposedly critical thought to be directed to and by that center. Hence, our task is to de-center modernity so that those aspects which are beneficial to our *ajiaco* can be used. We may begin with Hegel.

Hegel maintained that "Europe is absolutely the Center and End of the (premodern) world," with the Mediterranean as the axis of Universal History (1955:210, 235). His entire philosophical endeavor rests on the presupposition of the superiority of the Europeans and, therefore, the inferiority of non-Europeans. Northern Europe, specifically the "Germanic Spirit, is the Spirit of the New World. Its end is the realization of absolute truth, as the infinite self-determination of freedom, which has as its content its own absolute form" (1970:413). For Hegel, Universal History is a necessary movement that originated in Asia and moved toward Europe, where it became the end product of civilization and development. However, Hegel surgically removed the Iberian peninsula from the European continent. He specifically stated that Southern Europe (which includes Spain) "is not marked with a nucleus of development in itself" (1955:240). Thus, the importance of Iberia during the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries in developing modernity through both the conquest of the Americas and its role in constructing the "age of mercantilism" is denied and discarded.[6]

[6] According to Hegel, the demarcation of modernity occurred when the Europeans began to consolidate power over Other people and continents (1965:242). Ironically, one can pinpoint the start of modernity to the day when Spaniards violently encountered the indigenous people of the so-call "New World" during the latter part of the fifteenth century. Due to the communication that existed between Europe and the conquered "New World," modernity's movement of social intersubjectivity began to develop on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. However, as modernity in the Americas entered a stage of demarcation of its specificity in its relationship to European powers, defining itself as a new entity with numerous social, cultural, and political possibilities, it

Likewise, Africa and Latin America are removed from the movement of World History and situated, like Asia, in a state where, according to Hegel, "the inferiority of these individuals in all respects is manifest" (1955:199–200, 243). Thus, Europe becomes the self-appointed missionary of civilization. Hegel is a representative of his own kind. The consequences of the hegelian way of thinking relegate our own people to a space where we are incapable of providing any contribution to philosophical discourse (Dussel 1995:65–76). What then is the purpose of this space we are called to occupy in World History? It is to serve the center. As Dussel elucidates, power, domination and the center are identical (1990:6). This point becomes evident in Hegel's declaration that, "Against the absolute right that such people as Europeans possess by virtue of being the bearer of the development of the world Spirit, the spirit of other peoples [such as ourselves] has no right" (1969:430).

Still, we who are Cubans, whose roots include Amerindians, Spaniards, Africans, and Asians, must be cautious not to disregard the Eurocentric philosophers in spite of the justification they provided for the oppression of our people. The Europeans are not our enemies. They are part of our roots. Our struggle is with the discriminatory aspects of their philosophies. During his confrontation with Spanish colonialism, our Cuban mentor Martí said to fight the Spaniards with all our might, but not hate them. The struggle was not against the Spaniards but against the system (1936:163–74). So also, our battle today is not against Europeans or North Americans. Rather, it is against the institutionalized racism they erected to represent us, to divide us and to repress us.

How then is modernity helpful in constructing our philosophical foundation? In spite of the inherent colonial attitudes of Eurocentric modernity, its thought need not be totally abandoned. We Cubans can appreciate the architectural design of Eurocentric philosophy, specifically the modernistic concepts of liberty, equality and liberation from injustice. Concepts

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became a victim of colonialism. Modernity, even after our revolutions for independence, failed to be produced indigenously in Central and South America as our intellectuals submitted themselves to the power structures exported from the North Atlantic. It reached its climax under U.S. imperialism, which subjugated all elements of society to its demand for capital. Even when we attempted to foster an alternative, i.e. socialism in Cuba, it manifested itself in European form (Quijano 205–207).

of a democratic society respectful of basic and inalienable human rights are aspects of modernity we can and should continue to develop for our people. Our task is to learn how to re-articulate and update any Eurocentric thought so that it can be utilized within our original Cuban reality, while dismantling the repressive nature of that thought. In short, we must learn to borrow from Eurocentric knowledge while keeping Cuban wisdom as the foundation of our community's philosophy.

Philosophy is unable to transcend its own time. Instead, it reflects the activity of a given space. As such, philosophy becomes the manifestation of a historical process. Salient to the historical process of central Europe is the so-call "Enlightened" reliance on science. Science, as methodologically atheistic—that is, excluding God from the experimental knowledge of nature—introduced a new structure of knowledge. Kant articulated this shift by making scientific reason and rational politics the mediators of philosophical thought, which then through ethics provides direction for the transformation of human lives. Reason combined with freedom supposedly emancipated the individual from religious authoritarianism. In effect, the spirit of faith was exchanged for the spirit of modernity. Faith, like science, had to be objective to be believed. Specifically, Unamuno accuses Kant of making an immortal leap from the "Critique of Pure Reason," in which he subjected the traditional proofs of the existence of God to a destructive analysis, to the "Critique of Practical Reason" in which he reconstructs God, but as the God of the conscience, the Author of the moral order. This immortal leap was motivated by his immortal craving for immortality, the tragic fight of the individual to save itself (1966b; 1968b).

While Ortega, a neo-Kantian in his youth, attempted to introduce Kant's methodology to Spain, Unamuno, through his thoughts and actions, battled for a Spanish philosophy. Unamuno's efforts can enlighten Exilic Cubans in our battle for our own philosophical space. Do we as Cubans look solely toward North Atlantic philosophies, or do we look within our own heritage? These were the primary issues that separated Unamuno from Ortega, and they remain our primary issues today.

Ortega, accepting modernity's myth of the superiority of the center, believed Germany could render salvation from Spain's intellectual complacency. Through Germany, Spain could take her place amongst the "civilized" European community, absorbing the supremacy of Germanic culture in her development of new ideas. Spain should be flooded with the

latest philosophical advances occurring in Europe, specifically in Germany, so as to develop Spanish thought. Prior to Ortega's 1909 split with Unamuno concerning the foundation upon which to build Spain's philosophical future, Ortega wrote, "At times I am ethnically ashamed, ashamed to think that for centuries my race has existed without contributing the least bit to the study of humanity" (1974:71). Similarly, Exilic Cubans today, specifically YUCAS, are embarrassed by those elements of our own culture (i.e., Santeria) which appear non-modern to Anglo eyes.

Ortega's opponent, Unamuno, concludes *The Tragic Sense of Life* with a chapter entitled "Don Quixote in the Contemporary European Tragicomedy." Unamuno summons Spaniards to resist the nebulous values of Europe. For Unamuno, the choice was not between Europeanization or barbarism, technology or ignorance, modernity or the medieval. He argued that the kinetic principle embodied within European technological progress is not absolute, and its imposition upon the Spanish culture would rob her of her essence. His arguments for the rejection of the Europeanization of Spain can serve as a guide by which we Exilic Cubans can resist the continuous Angloization of our own culture. Yet, the threat of totally subjugating ourselves philosophically to Spanish thought is just as perilous. For Spain, like the United States, is but one of the roots that define who we are as an exilic people.

DEATH - THE STARTING POINT FOR AN AJIACO PHILOSOPHY

The starting point of an *ajiaco* philosophy occurs when the self becomes radically aware of its mortality, creating an anxious yearning for "salvation" and the "faith" to obtain it. Unamuno, as one of our Spanish roots, can serve as guide in constructing our Christian philosophy. He counters Descartes' *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) with *sum, ergo cogito* (Since I am human, I am also capable of thinking). For Unamuno, Descartes is guilty of reducing humans to insignificant postscripts to progress. Aristotle's political animal, Rousseau's social animal, Manchester's economic animal, or Linnæus' *homo sapiens* renders the "human" as an abstract and therefore meaningless term. Goizueta, a Cuban theologian, avers that terms such as these objectify the individual person by denying his or her particular, unique and intrinsic value. As a social, political, or economic animal, an individual can be manipulated to

accomplish the needs of the community, or the goals of the state, or the required increase in production (1995:135).

Instead, the individual should be viewed as the subject and supreme object of all philosophy, a tangible creature who is born, suffers, and dies, the emphasis here being on death rather than on sin. Spanish literature lacks the Eurocentric motif of wrestling with ones individual sin. No literature corresponding to *The Pilgrim's Progress* exists. It is not sin that we fear, but rather death. Unamuno's view of reality sees the human as a person of "*carne y hueso* (flesh and bone)," struggling to answer the unanswerable question of what happens to one's consciousness after death (1966b; 1968a). The distinction between Europe and Spain, as Unamuno saw it, is how each dealt with death. He struggled with its inevitability, a grappling he claims Europeans refused to undertake. Spanish intensity for life emerges from the realization of death and forces one to override logic, lest it obstruct passion. Such a passionate response becomes for Unamuno as valid as German systematic reasoning (1968d). Yet, how is this existential self, aware of its own mortality, to be understood?

For Unamuno, the self in attaining personal self awareness, becomes conscious of its own fundamental contradiction: the self as a unique living being whose *raison d'être* is eternal life on one hand, and the self who knows it must die on the other. Becoming conscious of this contradiction, the self develops an awareness of the religious dilemma within which it is located. Recognizing one's eternal death confirms one's existential individuality. Only in knowing one's mortality, or eternal nothingness, can one's existence simultaneously embody one's life and one's death. The cognizance of one's mortality becomes the ontological reference point in discerning the self and the self's world, which includes God. Our 'self' encounters God's love, face-to-face, in the space where our life, oriented toward its own end, intersects with God's own self-realization.

Dying is not some future event. Rather, dying is now, in the existential present, as a relative being before the negation or emptiness of the Absolute (Ph 2:6–8). The paradoxical structure of the divine *kenosis* is the praxis of God's own absolute self-negation on the cross. For Unamuno, who like Kierkegaard attempted to work out his salvation in "fear and trembling," any attempt to explicate this paradox of Christianity, aside from the suffering and tension it creates, is repulsive. Unlike Kierkegaard however, who chose God, Unamuno's distress is rooted in his inability to choose God. Contrary to Kierkegaard's "leap of faith," Unamuno refuses

to plunge into the subjective certainty of God's existence. Thus, to my mind, Unamuno fails to comprehend that we can only encounter the Absolute in our own self-negation, which reflects the paradox of the self-negation of God. Juan de la Cruz (St. John of the Cross) captures this concept of self-negation in his *Ascent of Mount Carmel* where he writes, "To reach satisfaction in all, desire its possession in nothing. To come to the knowledge of all, desire the knowledge of nothing. To come to possess all, desire the possession of nothing. To arrive at being all, desire to be nothing" (1987:45).

Unamuno's starting point was not Kierkegaard's and its acceptance of a Christianity that could not be rationally comprehended. At the center of Unamuno's philosophy is his mystic hunger for personal immortality anchored in an ambivalent hope for the existence of God. Faith in God's existence is not a "rational necessity but a vital anguish that leads us to believe in God... [that is] to hunger for divinity, to feel the lack and absence of God, to wish that God may exist" (1925:217–25). Such tension must exist, for agony means struggle, and as long as there are struggles there is life, not death.

Unamuno's refusal to take the necessary leap of faith left his philosophy incomplete, for he failed to grasp another Christian paradox: that of losing one's life in order to gain it (Mk 8:35). The self and the Absolute Other can only be expressed in the self-negation of each (Ph 1:21). When the self dies in the Absolute (Ga 2:20), the Absolute dies in the self. I suggest that salvation becomes the simultaneous self-negation of the Divine on the cross, and the self-negation of the self before that cross. Like Teresa of Avila, the self dying to self creates a mutual encounter, based on a relationship between two subjects, as opposed to two objects. This praxis, which we call an encounter with the Divine, is faith.

Faith as defined by Unamuno is hope, which is often choked off by knowledge or belief. Faith, as based on a mutual self-negating encounter of two subjects, stands apart from any special doctrine (orthodoxy) that represents God. Faith is not a rational concept but an imperative of the heart that hopes for immortality (1968c). Such a hope is made possible through the revelation of God communicated in the person of Jesus on the cross.

These paradoxes and mysteries of life are beyond the comprehension of rationality and can be known only through experience. For the person of faith a special kind of self-awareness is required. Because there exists

little in religion that is capable of rational resolution, Unamuno looks to the mystics for valid expressions of faith. But this is not the Neoplatonic or German mysticism which emphasizes the metaphysical and intellectual. Rather, it is a Spanish mysticism which passionately hungers for inward liberation through death. In a letter to Ortega, Unamuno writes: "They say we do not have a scientific spirit. But ours is of a different sort... If it were impossible for one nation to produce both a Descartes and a Juan de la Cruz, I would choose the latter" (Salcedo 1956:104). Our mysticism does not attempt to become lost in God. Instead, an attempt is made to fully and absolutely absorb the Deity into oneself. The core of our faith becomes the *dolor sabroso* (delicious pain) of St. Teresa that stresses God's oneness with each separate individual.

Eurocentric rationalism, unlike mysticism, fails us because the world of abstract concepts can never transcend this world. Ironically, Ortega, who began his career as a neo-Kantian, appears to agree. To him, rational reflection in Europe became utopian and unhistorical. He maintained that reasoning is but the combination of unreasonable views. Forsaking rationalism, Ortega sees a world where the pragmatic individual encounters an environment which is nothing more than a combination of advantages and obstacles (1939:93). Reality becomes subordinated to these subjective exigencies. Life's problems' cease being intellectual or scientific and require solutions that do not call for the discovery of a new scientific law. Ortega's exhortation to doubt science because of its inability to satisfy the volitional needs of humans (their mortality) is echoed by Unamuno, who concurs that scientific proofs leave life's essential and final questions unanswered (1942:67–72). Ortega realizes that void of God, philosophy, as well as science and art, becomes the end and justification of human life. He came to view German thought, from Kant until the 1900's, as the arrogance of a culture which simply transferred values previous Christian philosophers called "God" to what contemporary Germans dubbed the "idea" (Hegel), or the "primacy of the practical reason" (Kant), or "culture" (Cohen).

Unamuno's work, on the contrary, vindicates our existence by demythologizing philosophical abstractions, forcing us to deal with the passionate anxiety generated by a confrontation with our own mortality. Philosophy must strain beyond its systematic thought toward its purpose and reason, namely for existence: human existence complex humans made of *carne y hueso*. Philosophies which fail to channel knowledge for the ben-

efit of humanity become "a cemetery of dead ideas." For Unamuno, "science robs people of wisdom usually converting them into phantom beings loaded with facts" (1925:55). I believe that any Cuban Christian philosophy must follow a similar aim: ultimately to benefit not just "phantom beings loaded with facts" but the entire Cuban living community. Ortega's assumption that our socio-historical location constructs our culture which then bounds and binds our personal existence, facilitates the development of a praxis that can bring about this reconciliation among Cubans.

AJIACO PHILOSOPHICAL PRAXIS

If we define salvation as reconciliation with both the self-negating Absolute and with each other, as per the greatest commandment (Mt 22:37–40), then Cubans by definition lack salvation, for we "do not love [our] neighbors (each other) as [our]selves." To be saved is to be liberated, to be liberated is to be reconciled, and to evangelize is to simultaneously save, liberate, and reconcile. The equation "salvation = liberation = reconciliation" differs slightly with that of most liberationists who maintain that reconciliation flows from liberation. If we accept the liberationist formula that salvation equals liberation, and we define salvation as reconciling with God and one's fellow person, then by definition, salvation also means reconciliation. Refusing to reconcile, as in the case of Cubans, is to "live in sin." The estrangement of Exilic and Resident Cubans is our "unpardonable" sin manifested as the great separator. We remain separated from God because we are separated from each other. Our collective hatred, self-centeredness, and uncontrollable passion toward each other blind us to the recognition of our sin and prevent us from experiencing liberation.

The creation of our Cuban community can only be accomplished through the reconciliation of all Cubans. A decision to reconcile must come first if we are to construct our future reality together. Reality in the case of Cubans is our present lack of social coexistence. Our praxis, therefore, must create the framework that supports an *ajiaco* Christian philosophy. This in turn will give meaning to past and present divisions so that the new *ajiaco* Christian praxis and philosophy can challenge and change this reality. Such praxis becomes the by-product of a liberation which occurs within us as we struggle toward our *cubanidad.*

This praxis should be the starting point for a philosophical reflection that contradicts the most salient characteristic of Eurocentric philosophies:

namely, the individual as the epistemological starting point. Under this rubric, praxis becomes an action of an autonomous subject upon her or his environment, which reduces praxis to manipulation. That is the reason recent movements to bring about just societies have failed, because individuals were objectified. Goizueta makes this point nicely when he states that, "in a capitalist society, those unable or unwilling to contribute to economic growth and profitability will be marginalized; in a Marxist society, those unable or unwilling to contribute to the revolutionary transformation of society will be marginalized" (1995:80–87, 107–109).

A reconciled Cuba is not an abstract goal, some object "out there" to be achieved. A reconciled Cuba becomes revolutionary praxis precisely within the milieu of our present, personal, and peripheral social formation. It reflects an inward decision of self-negation before the Self-negating Absolute, reconciling us with both the Deity and with each other. It leads to the subversion of the reigning hegemony and to the genesis of an *ajiaco* Christian philosophy.

If Ortega is correct in asserting that, "I am myself and my environment," then the social reality which encompasses me forms the other half of my person (1941:84–89). Such a recognition emphasizes that our existence is in no sense abstract. But by the same token, it is in no way inferior to other socio-historical locations. Our culture as Exilic Cubans, in this our own space and time, is the embodiment of our fundamental convictions, influenced by our physical presence in this country. It brands our very existence, and determines our perception of reality as a reality different from that of Resident Cubans.

This difference is due to being situated (geographically, economically, politically, and culturally) in our own unique reality. We are unable to escape our "here," and this space determines our perspective a perspective that reveals certain things while concealing others. The Exilic Cuban necessarily sees reality from a different angle than the Resident Cuban. Accordingly, each group chooses different aspects of existence that are in need of reconciliation. What is relevant for one group may be irrelevant, if not alienating to the other.

The perspectives of both the Resident and Exilic communities are necessarily partial and flawed. We may not have an option as to where we are situated, but we can decide to take up a different position in relationship to our situation. The determining option which Exilic Cubans must take is one that assumes solidarity with those who profess themselves to be Chris-

tians in both the Exilic and Resident communities. Trust in the *imago Dei* residing within each and every person is key in fostering a unified commitment to reconciliation. Recognition of the *imago Dei* residing within us becomes a response to the self-negating suffering of the Absolute upon the cross, leading to solidarity among those who are called by His name. The cross is foremost a theology of solidarity among those who are marginalized. The victims of both Cubas become the crucified chosen people whose suffering creates solidarity with each other, and with the cross. The recognition of our mutual *imago Dei* becomes the space for redemption for all who are victims of the oppression imposed by each upon the other.

The recognition that we each approach the wider world from our own perspectives indicates that our first and authentic reality is social and historical. The future of Cubans can begin to be philosophically and theologically constructed in a manner which leads toward reconciliation only when both Resident and Exilic groups enter the same point of time and space as their very own point of entrance. This praxis is crucial, for the basis of our community is coexistence, two groups existing with and for each other. However, Cubans must decide to establish a relationship of reciprocity so that the "one" and the "other" form a "we" leading toward mutual intimacy. Solidarity presupposes justice. Such a relationship incorporates principles of equality. Reconciliation can never function within a system of subordination where the Exilic community is positioned against and above the Resident community. Simply stated, reconciliation can never occur apart from mutually recognizing ourselves in the other, and thus becoming our very own self.

Although inequality is unacceptable, Cubans must ask if their ultimate goal is to strive toward equality or liberation. The two terms are not synonymous. Equality is defined by the U.S. dominant culture as "equal opportunity" in areas of employment, housing or education. Equality is achieved when each is viewed as equal before the law. The socioeconomic location of Exilic Cubans has led to equating liberation with equality, which in turn has been equated with the middle-class dream of white Anglo males. Such a definition limits any theological construction to the North American mentality of success (equal chances to become unequal), reducing the quest for a liberating praxis to political maneuvering within society in order to place oneself in a superior position. Such maneuvering can only lead to the creation of a new oppressor: we, the Exilic Cubans.

A CUBAN CHRIST

The construction of our philosophy requires a common space within which all Cubans can begin a dialogue leading toward a praxis of solidarity. One space where common ground can be forged is our understanding of Christ specifically, an indigenous Christ who, like us, is Cuban. Because all people depict ultimate reality in a visible form that is native to their own culture, an Angloizied Christ, although appropriate for Anglos, is impotent for Cubans. For this reason we must turn our attention to a Cuban Christ who can encompass all the roots of our *ajiaco*. This is accomplished through esthetics, which serves as a leap beyond what Weber called the "iron-cage" of Western rationalism.

Art, specifically that depicting the crucifixion, serves as a path. As a symbol, art contains the capacity to transcend the limitation of language by expressing ideas and concepts in non-discursive forms. Through art, concrete issues are communicated by way of the artist peering into mystery. Art has the ability to transcend a specific space and time so as to transform society. Not limited to interpreting reality, art is capable of reconstructing it.

Unamuno attempts this task in his book-length poem *The Christ of Velázquez*. By anthropomorphizing the abstract God of the theologians, he humanizes the Divine. He reconciles Descartes' bifurcation of human passion and reason through art. His poetry, as an outpouring of hopes, fears, and desires is converted into ideas as products of passions. Likewise, Ortega saw reality and art in a close embrace, where all superior works become an expression of experience molded by passion and elevated to universal legitimacy (1972:100). Art serves as the historical vanguard resisting societal manipulation by providing a space where any major alteration in philosophy can first appear.

Velázquez's masterpiece, *Cristo de San Plácido*[7] treats an insoluble situation by presenting a particular point of space and time as an expression of the entire world and the tragic problem of human life. Velázquez's Christ is not a synthesis of a series of movements. Rather, it is a single arrested instant in the existence of Christ, a distinct moment which captures a

[7] *Cristo de San Plácido*, also known as *Christ on the Cross*, is an oil on canvas (248 x 169 cm) that was completed in 1635 in Madrid. It was originally painted for the Benedictine convert of San Plácido in Madrid. Today it hangs in the Prado.

Christ who is always dying but never dies, self-negating but never empty. He paints time by giving eternity to that very instance. Art portrays existence as it is: condemned to be, to pass and to decay, concrete and never completed (Ortega 1972:105–106). In Velázquez's rendition, death's hope finds expression. Immortality is achieved within the moment captured by Velázquez's paintbrush wherein the dying Christ does not die so that we can live. Liberation is achieved through the "failure" of Jesus' ministry as depicted in His struggle upon the cross.

The "irrationality" of the cross becomes for Unamuno the cornerstone rejected by modernity, but desperately needed by modernity. So also the cross as depicted by Velázquez becomes a scandal. The philosopher's quest for the rational justification of suffering in human existence often concludes with God's absence or impotence. A Cuban Christ offers God within that suffering. For Unamuno, the bloody Christ repels, if not repulses all who fail to understand the Spanish Christ and the cult of suffering attached to Him (1966a). Surely a more civilized and less gory process could be constructed by which the Divine could redeem the world. Here, Christ is presented to us as a bruised, blood-streaked Victim of human hatred who struggles in anguish with death. He is presented as the Christ who suffered freely, not as a price demanded by God, but as the price of a world which suffers, with suffering and violence spilling over into the Divine.

Our philosophical reflections on evil and theodicy are interrupted by death, specifically the unjust death of the crucified. The Cuban Christ becomes the ultimate tragic Victim who dies like the innumerable oppressed victims of Batista's regime[8] or *el paredon*,[9] all seemingly abandoned by God. The presence of God is not as a transcendent power standing triumphantly over against earthly injustice. Rather, God is present within a self-negating Christ whose own power of love surrenders his life in the struggle

[8] A Batistiano who served as a corporal in Batista's secret police told me of the physical torture and death that were inflicted on those who opposed the regime. A specific technique used in interrogations, or simply to teach the prisoner "a lesson" was a beating conducted with the dried out penis of a bull. The bull pizzles were effective for they left no bruises or other marks on the victim.

[9] "To the wall", the post-revolution rally cry that initiated purge trials in a Roman circus type atmosphere always ended with the execution or long imprisonment of counter revolutionaries, even when those on trial were found not guilty, as in the case of forty pilots charged in March of 1959.

against the political injustices of His day. Through Christ's unjust death, He is made the King of Life, drawing all to Him as He is "lifted up"(Jn 12:32). Yet, His agony does not end with the cross but continues to exist within the daily suffering of all who suffer.

The hope for immortality for which Unamuno searched is found in the Divine's self-negation manifested as a praxis of love, a praxis that always leads toward justice, by reconciling us to God and to each other. This praxis of reconciliation serves as the basis and first act for an *ajiaco* Christian philosophy and leads toward turning enemies into *compañeros*. We recognize, if not confess, that Christianity when captured by social institutions has always been exploited for political purposes. The danger facing both Cubas, Resident and Exilic, is the manipulation of our perception of Christianity to justify our individual political agendas. Such a blasphemous praxis would only solidify the hostility which already exists between both communities.

We need to turn away from Christendom[10] with its theological triumphalism and search within our own faith community for reconciliation. Although each group's perception of what Christianity is may differ based on their separate locations, Christians within both Cuban communities are commanded to seek reconciliation.[11] This reason alone binds Christians within both communities to become the one remnant *cubanidad* of faith serving their people by being agents of reconciliation. The ques-

[10] Christendom is defined as the relationship between the church, state, and civil society where the state serves as primary mediation. Within such a relationship, the church occupies a space where it seeks to protect its presence and increase its power in civil society through the use of the state (Richard 1987: 1–15).

[11] Throughout the Biblical text, Christians are called to reconcile with their brothers and sisters as an extension of the reconciliation that takes place between God and humans through Christ. An example of this tenet can be found in Mt 5:23–24, "So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering"; 1 Jn 4:20–21, "Anyone who says, 'I love God', and hates his brother or sister, is a liar, since a person who does not love the sister or brother that can be seen cannot love God, whom has never been seen."; and 2 Cor 5:18–19, "It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation. In other

tion before us is how our two communities can find and build on those elements where agreement occurs.

The communion table (the table of community) is where those who call themselves Christians, whether they are Exilic or Resident Cubans, find hope for reconciliation. Only friends break bread, and only a community partakes in the Eucharist. Within this powerful symbol lie the mystery that transforms adversaries into *compañera/os*. The word "companion" is etymologically rooted in the Vulgar Latin word *compania*, a compound noun meaning "what one eats with bread," formed from the Latin *com* "with" and *panis* "bread." A *compañero/a* is one with whom you break bread, one with whom you have community, one who by definition, is not your enemy. Cubans must call for a new theology, a theology which leads to the ethical praxis of embracing enemies. How do enemies embrace? By first dying to the self that made them enemies. We must die to our present self, which has become a Eurocentric construction whether it is capitalist or Marxist. Both these selves are colonial legacies, and as such foreign to the promise of our *ajiaco* culture.

The reappropriation of the crucified Christ as seen through the eyes of Spaniards like Ortega and Unamuno offers us a philosophical foundation that de-centers the reigning Eurocentrism. Although North Atlantic philosophies can provide some insight and direction to an *ajiaco* Christianity, they ultimately fall short in understanding the Cuban location because it is not their location. For these reasons, we unapologetically call for an *ajiaco* Christian philosophy that will capture the essence of Cubaness.

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words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself." If they will know we are Christians by our love (Jn 13:35); then as per 1 Cor. 13, that love must be patient, kind; never rude, selfish, taking offense, never resentful; always ready to excuse, trust, hope, and endure. Succinctly put, love reconciles. Al l passages quted are form the Jerusalem Bible.

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Why the "Greater Good" Isn't a Defense
Classical Theodicy in Light of the Biblical Genre of Lament[1]

J. RICHARD MIDDLETON

ALTHOUGH THE TERM "THEODICY" WAS COINED AT THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH century by Gottfreid Wilhelm von Leibniz in his famous response to the tragedy of the Lisbon earthquake, concern with the relationship of evil to divine power and goodness considerably antedates Leibniz.[2] Plato addressed the issue of theodicy in Book II of the *Republic* and Epicurus is thought to have posed the clas sic terms of the dilemma. Although Epicurus' text is lost to us, David Hume alludes to it in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part X, when he writes:

> Epicurus' old questions are yet unanswered. Is he [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?[3] (Hume 1947:198)

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Theological Society at the University of Calgary, in Calgary, Alberta on June 7, 1994.

[2] Although Leibniz published his *Essais de théodicée* in 1710 (six years before his death), he mentioned the proposed work and its title in a letter of 1695. For an English translation, see Leibniz 1985.

[3] Epicurus's statement of the problem is preserved also in Lactantius, *De Ira Dei*, chap. 13 (written 313–314 CE). For a translation see Lactantius 1965:92–93.

Within the Christian tradition, the responses to this dilemma have been legion. The most famous, and the most influential, is certainly Augustine's "free will defense" in his early work, *De Libero Arbitrio*, begun in 388 C.E., two years after his conversion from Manicheanism to catholic Christianity, and completed in 395, after a hiatus during which he was ordained Bishop of Hippo.[4] What is crucial to Augustine's argument in *De Libero Arbitrio* is not simply that he appeals to human freedom as the "cause" of evil (*De Libero Arbitrio*, III.22.63). Rather, central to Augustine's early theodicy is his claim that the misuse of freedom (a putative evil) is balanced by God's retributive punishment, resulting in the "just" suffering of the soul (*De Libero Arbitrio*, II.16.43), which guarantees a good outcome overall in God's providential ordering of the cosmos. It is the punishment of evil by the imposition of suffering that serves, in Augustine's theodicy, to rectify this evil and thus to justify God.[5]

Few would follow Augustine anymore in the *particulars* of his argument, for we are inclined to view suffering itself as evil—something Augustine explicitly denies. However, Augustine's *strategy* in constructing a theodicy has become standard in Western, and especially Christian, intellectual history. I therefore agree with John Hick in *Evil and the God of Love* when he describes Augustine as the "fountainhead" from which all scholastic, reformation and enlightenment theodicies have flowed, and I therefore am willing to speak, with Hick, of a dominant "Augustinian" type of theodicy (Hick 1977:iii-v, 3, 37). What I dispute, however, is Hick's well-known claim to have developed an "Irenaean" theodicy, taking its inspiration from Irenaeus of Lyons, as an alternative to the "Augustinian." Here I side instead with David Ray Griffin in *God, Power, and Evil*, not

[4] Augustine recounts the circumstances surrounding the writing in *Retractiones*, I.9.1.

[5] According to Augustine, if anyone sins, suffering is immediately imposed "lest for a single moment the beauty of the universe would be defiled by having the uncomeliness of sin without the comeliness of penalty" (*De Libero Arbitrio*, III.14.44). In a more extended explanation, he comments: "The voluntary state of being sinful is dishonourable. Hence the penal state is imposed to bring it into order, and is therefore in itself not dishonourable. Indeed, it compels the dishonourable state to become harmonized with the honour of the universe, so that the penalty of sin corrects the dishonour of sin" (III.9.25). In other words, suffering imposed on sinners "contributes to the perfection of the universe" (III.9.25). (All translations from Augustine 1953)

only when he agrees with Hick that the problems inherent in later theodicies are present at least implicitly in Augustine, but also when he places Hick, despite his disclaimers, squarely in the Augustinian camp (Griffin 1976:17, 72, 116, 131, 174–175; also Gooch 1991).

THE STRATEGY OF THE GREATER GOOD DEFENSE

What could avowed opponents like Augustine and Hick possibly have in common? Certainly not the specific arguments of their respective theodicies. What unites them is a common strategy. This strategy is described by Keith Yandell in an important 1974 article as the "greater good defense" (Yandell 1974; also Yandell 1984:214–45). Although he does not make explicit mention of either Augustine or Hick, Yandell advances the claim that anyone who desires fidelity to the Christian tradition and attempts to resolve the problem of evil is constrained to argue that any evil present in the world is ultimately necessary, from God's point of view, for the production of some greater good that would not be possible without this evil.[6]

Yandell's precise statement of the greater good defense is as follows: "Every evil is logically necessary to some good which either counterbalances or overbalances it, and some evil is [in fact] overbalanced by the good to which it is logically necessary" (Yandell 1974:4).[7] Whereas Augustine's explicit position in *De Libero Arbitrio* is that the world is no worse for all the evil in it, due to God's providence (technically, that all evil is "counterbalanced" by good), by the time we get to his later *Enchiridion* Augustine boldly claims that "God judged it *better* to bring

[6] According to Melville Y. Stewart, in his recent book-length study of greater good theodicies, "Most if not all theistic attempts to resolve the problem of evil make use in some way of the greater-good defence" (Stewart 1993:56).

[7] In a recent article Yandell has explored to what extent his theodicy is compatible with the existence of gratuitous or morally unjustified evil. Although he seems to allow this possibility in the course of his argument, he nevertheless makes a distinction between the existence of gratuitous evil and the existence of evil which an agent would be gratuitous or morally unjustified in permitting. In the end Yandell denies that there are any evils that God would gratuitously permit to exist (Yandell 1989:30). And he affirms at the outset, as a standard theistic position, that "*Necessarily, if God allows an evil to exist, then He has a morally sufficient reason for allowing it to exist*" (Yandell 1989:17; emphasis his).

good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist" (*Enchiridion* VIII, 27).[8] The present world with all its evil thus constitutes a greater good, overall, than a world without evil. Evil is here "overbalanced" by good.

Augustine, of course, nowhere uses Yandell's terminology of counterbalancing or overbalancing, nor does he speak of evil being "logically necessary" to good, as Yandell and many contemporary writers on theodicy do. There are, however, at least two ways to phrase a greater good defense. On the one hand, we may begin with the specific good to be attained (e.g., free will, moral character, union with God) and claim that evil is *logically necessary* to its attainment. This is the more modern formulation. On the other hand, we may begin with a particular case of evil and claim that if it occurs, then some good is *inevitably produced.* This is typically Augustine's approach.

In both cases, however, no actual instance of evil in the world can in fact make the world worse, since either it will be "counterbalanced" by an equal good which results from it (Augustine's position in *De Libero Arbitrio*) or it will be sometimes counterbalanced and sometimes "overbalanced" by a surpassing good which results from it (the later Augustine of the *Enchiridion*).

Let me now illustrate briefly the greater good defense in action from three contemporary theodicies. The first is Alvin Plantinga's widely discussed "free will defense," which he proposed both in an article by that name (published in two versions in the mid-sixties) and in his later book, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Plantinga 1965; Plantinga 1967; Plantinga 1977:7–64. Cf. Plantinga 1974: chap. 9).

Although Plantinga does not use the terminology of a "greater good" in developing his own argument, he does speak of God having a "good reason" for creating a world with evil. He is constrained to speak of this by his desire to answer the "atheological" charge of J. L. Mackie and others that there is a logical incompatibility among the following three propositions (Mackie 1955):

1. God is omnipotent.
2. God is wholly good.
3. Evil exists.

[8] Translation taken from Augustine 1955. David Ray Griffin has analyzed Augustine's later theodicy, particularly as found in *De Civitas Dei* and *Enchiridion*, in some detail, paying special attention to the tension between human free will and God's omnipotence and predestination (Griffin 1976:55–71).

Plantinga argues that these propositions are inconsistent only if God has no "good reason" to allow evil (Plantinga 1977:26, 31).[9]

This notion here of a good reason or, in current terminology, a "morally sufficient reason," for evil is the functional equivalent of the "greater good" which justifies God allowing evil.[10] The greater good or morally sufficient reason that Plantinga suggests is the possession and right use of free will. Although free will is logically impossible without evil, Plantinga argues, it is such a great good that it outweighs, and thus justifies all the evil extant in the world (Plantinga 1977:30).

Without resolving the question of whether the content of Plantinga's account of free will is significantly different from or homologous with Augustine's, it is clear that the *strategy* of Plantinga's theodicy is essentially Augustinian.[11]

But then so is the strategy of John Hick in his now classic *Evil and the God of Love*. Although Hick claims to propose a theodicy that follows not Augustine, but Ireneaus and that provides an alternative to Augustinian theodicy, his resolution of the problem of evil constitutes another version of the greater good defense. In Hick's case, the greater good or morally sufficient reason for God allowing evil consists in the process of "soul making" or character building which results from our struggle with evil and which cannot be attained without such evil. Soul making, which logi-

[9] Although Mackie, following Epicurus and David Hume, cited the above three propositions, Plantinga, following the trend of much contemporary theodicy—which has an ancient precedent in Marcion (as quoted by Tertullian in *Contra Marcion*, 2.5)—cites as an additional fourth proposition that God is omniscient. I do not believe this changes anything essential in either the strategy of his argument or my critique.

[10] Although Augustine speaks of the "sufficient reason" why God gave us free will, despite all the evil that has resulted from it, in *De Libero Arbitrio*, II.1.3, Nelson Pike seems to have been the first contemporary philosopher to use the expression "morally sufficient reason" in the context of theodicy in his essay, "Hume on Evil" (Pike 1964:88). The notion of a "morally sufficient reason" for evil has now become commonplace in theodicy discussions.

[11] For my purposes I am not distinguishing here, as Plantinga does (1977:26–28), between a *defense* (wherein the possibility that God has good reasons for allowing evil is argued for the purpose of refuting an "atheological" charge) and a *theodicy* (wherein the actual reasons why God allows evil are advanced as a positive position). That Plantinga suggests the right use of free will as God's *possible* morally sufficient reason, one which is *compatible* with

cally necessitates evil, is such a great good that it justifies God in allowing this evil (Hick 1977:213–214, 336, 363–364, *et passim*).[12]

Yet another version of the greater good defense is provided by Eleonore Stump. Building explicitly on both Plantinga and Hick, (and also Richard Swinbourne) Stump argues that the significant exercise of free will is logically necessary for the process of being redeemed from one's own evil and thus for attaining union with God. The required sort of exercise of free will, Stump asserts, the sort that results in union with God, "is of such great value that it outweighs all the evils of the world" (Stump 1985:416).

THE EXPERIENCE OF IRREDUCIBLE EVIL

Whereas the *motivation* of the greater good defense is admirable in that it attempts to retain an orthodox doctrine of God as both good and providentially sovereign in the face of evident evil, it is the *strategy* that is problematic. For to claim that every evil in the world contributes to some equal or greater good which would be otherwise unattainable means quite simply that there is no *genuine* evil. Genuine evil, as David Ray Griffin has cogently argued, requires, as a minimum, the criterion that without it the

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God's goodness, omnipotence and the existence of evil (as opposed to claiming that this in fact is the reason God allows evil), does not affect my analysis of his greater good strategy. Whatever the epistemic status of the particular reasons Plantinga suggests, it seems that he believes God does in fact have "good reasons" for allowing evil, or that if God did have such reasons, this would be unproblematic for orthodox faith. It seems to me, therefore, that Plantinga is committed, minimally, to the formal structure of the greater good defense *at least while he is mounting his argument.* It is possible, however, that the matter is not so simply resolved. Indeed, my position here is contested by Terrence Tilley both in an article (Tilley 1984) and a book (Tilley 1991:130–31) with which I am in fundamental sympathy, as well as in private correspondence (October 10, 1995). According to Tilley, a *defense* (as practiced by Plantinga) is a significantly different sort of speech-act from a *theodicy* and is not subject to my critique (which in some ways is quite similar to his own).

[12] For a comparison of Yandell's and Hick's greater good arguments, see Stewart 1993:123–143.

universe would be a better place. Otherwise it would not be genuine, but only *prima facie* evil (Griffin 1976:21–29).[13]

Prima Facie versus Genuine Evil

Take the following example. It is a beautiful spring day as I sit at my desk struggling to write this paper. Suppose I experience this struggle as a *prima facie* evil, in the sense that I initially disapprove of it. I think it ought not be this way. I would prefer to be out-of-doors riding my bicycle. However, because I value the completion of this paper as an important good which outweighs both the struggle and my staying indoors, I judge this *prima facie* evil (all things considered) to be worth it. So I affirm it as a good thing and I commit myself to the task at hand.

Many such examples of *prima facie* evils could be given, from the parental discipline of children to the amputation of a leg to save someone's life. It is even possible that some cases of chronic illness or severe financial hardship are justified by some greater good which they produce, though I would stress the word *some* and would not dare make such a judgement glibly.

Note, however, that in the case of a merely *prima facie* evil, although sorrow might be quite appropriate, we ought not attempt to prevent it from occurring. This is illustrated in Jesus' rebuke of Peter for suggesting that he try to avoid the cross, notwithstanding his own agony over his approaching death, or the weeping of the women at the foot of the cross.

Indeed, for Christians the paradigm case of *prima facie* evil is certainly the crucifixion. Without denying Jesus' suffering or taking away any of the pain of his death, the Christian tradition has judged that, in view of what his death accomplished (the reconciliation of the world to God), Christ's death was ultimately *good*. In view of the redemption God has

[13] Hick openly admits that from the perspective of the eschaton even the most radical evil "will not have been merely evil" (Hick 1977:364). But this is implied throughout *Evil and the God of Love*, in his constant emphasis on the importance of the early Easter Liturgy (5th-7th century), known by its first line, *O felix culpa quae talem ac tantum meruit habere redemporem* ("O fortunate crime which merited such and so great a redeemer"). Hick claims that this notion of evil as a "fortunate crime" is the heart and cornerstone of Christian theodicy (Hick 1977:176–77, 239, 244, 364), correctly noting that this applies equally to Augustinian theodicy (239).

effected, the death of Jesus was worthwhile. That is why Christians praise God for the cross. Their overall attitude to the event is one of affirmation that it was right and good that it happened.

The trouble with the greater good defense is that it would require this attitude of us in regard to *every* case of evil. To put it rather bluntly, the greater good defense, in Augustine or elsewhere, requires us to affirm as good (all things considered) not just Christ's death, an amputation to save a life or parental discipline, but also three hundred years of the West African slave trade, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, tribal slaughter in Rawanda, and the ovens of Auschwitz and Dachau. If the greater good defense is true, although we might feel sorrow over these events when viewed in isolation, nevertheless we ought ultimately to praise God for them, since seen in their proper perspective they are necessary to some greater good which could not be accomplished without them.

From the point of view of the greater good defense, then, Elie Wiesel's moving response to evil in his book *Night* is, to say the least, inappropriate. Not only is it not logically required to give up belief in God in the face of evil, a proponent of the greater good defense might argue, but the fifteen year old Wiesel (or Wiesel's narrative persona) should in fact have praised God for what he saw (and smelled) that fateful night in 1944. But I will let Wiesel have his say.

> In front of us flames. In the air that smell of burning flesh. It must have been about midnight. We had arrived—at Birkenau, reception centre for Auschwitz...
>
> Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.
>
> Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.
>
> Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never (Wiesel 1982:26, 32).

Now the objection may indeed be raised that I have uncharitably attributed claims to proponents of the greater defense that they do not make.

First of all, then, let it be remembered that Augustine has no place in his scheme for innocent suffering. All suffering is justly deserved and thus good (*De Libero Arbitrio*, I.11.22).

But, further, if we were to interrogate contemporary proponents of the greater good defense, the claims become quite explicit. Yandell, for example, grants "the psychological forcefulness of appeal to infant mortality and geriatric disability," yet he maintains that this detracts in no way from the logic of his theodicy. In fact, the problem with such appeals, he argues, is that they obscure clear philosophical thinking on the matter (Yandell 1974:13).[14]

Eleonore Stump is more sensitive to the "psychological force" of such appeals. But, like Yandell, she believes such appeals have no logical force. Stump writes:

> The suffering of children is in my view unquestionably the instance of evil most difficult for the problem of evil, and there is something almost indecent about any move resembling an attempt to explain it away.... With considerable diffidence, then, I want to suggest that Christian doctrine is committed to the claim that a child's suffering is outweighed by the good for the child which can result from that suffering (Stump 1985:410).

Does Stump understand what she is saying here? Most definitely. Right after she delivered a shortened version of her paper on "The Problem of Evil" at Cornell University in September 1985, a young Jewish student, voice trembling with emotion, asked Stump if she meant to imply that God had some morally sufficient reason for allowing the Nazi slaughter of six million Jews. She said after some hesitation: "Yes." He said, "Fuck you," picked up his knapsack, and walked out.[15]

[14] This downplaying the importance of experience leads Yandell to state that "one's *feeling* that God's existence cannot be compatible with the apparently gratuitous evils that obtain in our world *is not by itself worth anything* unless it unpacks in arguments that are sound and valid" (Yandell 1989:30; emphases added).

[15] Stump's paper was presented in the Graduate Christian Forum lecture series at Cornell University, September 26, 1985. I was sitting a few rows behind the student in question.

That exchange illustrates vividly the first problem with the greater good defense, namely that it does not take our experience of evil seriously enough.[16]

Implications of Believing the Greater Good Defense

Let me be clear what I am *not* saying. I am not saying that proponents of the greater good defense are insensitive to human suffering or that they universally downplay the radical nature of evil. And I am certainly not saying that all proponents of the greater good defense claim that every putative evil ought to be treated as if it were really good. My point is the more modest one that such treatment is implied in their position. Or, to be perhaps even more precise, that such treatment would be the practice of anyone who consistently *believed* the greater good defense.

This criticism concerns, in other words, the inner logic of the position. The greater good defense simply cannot account for human experience of irreducible evil. And, as a result, I want to argue, if it were genuinely believed, it would undercut our ability to deal redemptively with such evil.

Whereas some would claim that the question of the existential value of the greater good defense as a comfort in the face of suffering and grief is logically distinct from, and therefore irrelevant to, its validity as a rational argument, I am inclined to side with Irving Greenberg in his famous comment about Auschwitz: "No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children" (Greenberg 1977:27).[17] This means I also take seriously the question once put to me by a young black theological student about my pro-

[16] For a profound analysis and critique of the Enlightenment discourse of theodicy that has significant overlap with my own, see Terrence Tilley's aptly titled *The Evils of Theodicy*. Tilley explains: "I have come to see theodicy as a discourse practice which disguises real evils while those evils continue to afflict people. In short, engaging in the discourse practice of theodicy *creates* evils, not the least of which is the radical disjunction of 'academic' philosophical theology from 'pastoral' counsel" (Tilley 1991:3).

[17] Greenberg's essay documents both the horrors of the Holocaust and attitudes toward these horrors, with profound theological reflection on the theodicy question that takes both God and evil with the utmost seriousness.

posed resolution of a particular theological issue: "That's all well and good, but can you *preach* it, brother?"[18]

The pastoral impact or relevance of the greater good defense to situations of either counseling or preaching is not limited, however, to whether this defense exacerbates the grief of a bereaved person, for it does far more than that. If the greater good defense were truly believed, it would undercut motivation for both petitionary prayer and redemptive opposition to evil by generating a self-deceptive apathy instead of a biblically inflamed passion for justice and shalom. My question about the greater good defense, therefore, is not whether you can preach it, but whether you can *believe* it.

The matter of petitionary prayer is relatively clear. If I genuinely believed that any particular case of evil that I encounter is allowed by God for some equal or greater good that could not be produced without it, why would I ask God to remove or modify this evil? What would be the point, in that case, of Jesus' abrasive parable about the insistent widow who badgered the judge until he dispensed justice to her (Luke 18:1–8)? Jesus says the parable is about prayer, but does God ever *not* dispense justice? The possibility is never considered in its full force in classical theodicy.

The case against actively opposing evil is similar. If evil is necessary to some good, from whence would the motivation to oppose it come? If I really believed the greater good defense, what would generate the sort of holy dissatisfaction with the way things are that is the *sine qua non* of redemptive action? Believing the greater good defense would result in nothing less than ethical paralysis.

But, what is perhaps worse, is that this paralysis is rooted in a profound prospect of self-deception. This may be illustrated by way of an important parallel between the greater good defense and just war arguments. In both cases some putative evil is deemed necessary to, and therefore justified in light of, some greater good. In the case of just war arguments, some of the inevitable suffering caused by war is justified in light of a particular military objective.

Let us take the 1991 Gulf War as an example. This war has the merit not only of being relatively prominent in our memories due to the on-the-

[18] This question was originally asked about the content of my doctoral research on the *imago Dei*, but is equally applicable to theodicy. On the *imago Dei*, see Middleton 1994b and Middleton and Walsh 1995:108–27.

spot coverage it received in the Western news media, but also because it is evident that at least *during* the actual war President Bush, along with the majority of the North American public, believed this was a "just war." That is, they believed that the greater good of liberating Kuwait from Iraqi occupation constituted a morally sufficient reason for the death and suffering that were necessary to accomplish this. It is an open question whether North Americans would have persisted in their belief that the war was just if they were continually confronted in the news media with its actual cost in terms of the massive loss of human life and wanton destruction that were occurring.

Certainly, to maintain the public's conviction that the war was in fact just required language that downplayed human suffering. Hence the antiseptic technical jargon of "sorties," "ordinances" and "degradation of defensive perimeters." This jargon, combined with strict censorship of the media—especially censorship of video footage of any actual fighting—made it relatively easy for us to watch the nightly TV newscasts without too much guilt and certainly without any passion. This is in marked contrast with the explicit footage of the Vietnam War that bombarded American viewers through their television sets and which is often credited with the growing sense of outrage that developed against that war.

It is probably an overstatement to say that in the case of the Gulf War the benevolent hand of Big Brother took us dangerously close to an Orwellian world where we were lulled and numbed into believing that "War is peace" (and that evil is good).[19] Yet Orwellian doublespeak might well be evident in the White House news release about President Bush's state of mind the morning the war began. "The President is at peace with himself," declared the release, to which one commentator wryly responded that peace was the *last* thing on the President's mind that morning.

[19] Orwell has Winston, the protagonist of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, reflect: "In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it. It was inevitable that they should make that claim sooner or later: the logic of their position demanded it. Not merely the validity of experience, but the very existence of external reality, was tacitly denied by their philosophy.... The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears" (Orwell 1954: 67–68). There is a striking similarity between this analysis and my claims about the greater good defense.

While the Gulf War may be over, the world still persists in terrible evil. Believing the greater good defense, I would contend, is like living in the midst of a never-ending war, where one has continually to con oneself into accepting its justness. Given our existential experience of irreducible evil, this constitutes a massive project in self-deception. Such self-deception leads inexorably to apathy and cuts the nerve of any possibility for opposition to evil and the transformation of the present order. I do not think it is mere coincidence that the one place where Plato attempts to resolve the theodicy problem is in the *Republic* (Book II, 377b-380c), where its function is precisely to legitimate social control in the ideal commonwealth by *preventing* questioning of divine justice.

THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE

Is it also mere coincidence that three of the examples I have chosen to illustrate people taking evil seriously—Wiesel, Greenberg and the student at Cornell—are Jewish? It may certainly be argued that these examples all deal with the Nazi Holocaust and since this is a terrible, even paradigmatic case of evil which was perpetrated primarily against Jews, it is natural that Jewish response to this event will be dramatic, even extreme.

But there is a further consideration. I believe Martin A. Bertman is on the right track when he suggests: "The Hebrew attitude toward the apparent existence of evil in the world has generally been to adopt the principle that the individual ought not to deny his own experience" (Bertman 1975:43). This goes back, well beyond recent Jewish experience of the Holocaust, to the Hebrew Bible itself. As I intend to illustrate, it is more likely that the biblical writers, and those whose consciousness is shaped by biblical sensitivities, would daringly *question* rather than glibly affirm God's justice or goodness in the face of a putative case of injustice. The experience of evil in the Hebrew Scriptures, in other words, is typically taken as veridical.[20]

[20] Unless otherwise specified, the biblical quotations that follow are from the NIV, except that I have substituted "Yahweh" for "LORD" throughout.

Audacious Biblical Texts

How else do we explain Abraham's audacious question to God, prefaced by the sort of hortatory remarks one might make to a child, in Genesis 18:25?

> Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Does Abraham really think God needs this kind of condescending reminder about right and wrong? Evidently, yes, in the face of what he perceived as obvious evil—God's proposed wholesale destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, if there are righteous people living there.

But this outright questioning of God's justice is not limited to Genesis 18. It is found also in the prophets and throughout the Psalms, and pervades Job's speeches in chapters 3–31 of that book. A few examples are in order.

Both Habakkuk and Jeremiah explicitly raise the theodicy problem in direct address to God, paradoxically combining affirmation of God's justice with questioning of that very justice. First Habakkuk 1:13.

> Your eyes are too pure to look on evil;
> you cannot tolerate wrong.
> Why then do you tolerate the treacherous?
> Why are you silent while the wicked
> swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

Also Jeremiah 12:1.

> You are always righteous, O Yahweh,
> when I bring a case before you.
> Yet I would speak with you about your justice:
> Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
> Why do all the faithless live at ease?

What these two prophets have done is first to affirm, respectfully, what is supposed to be true about the God with whom they have to do, and then to question that affirmation in light of their undeniable experience of evil.

Often, however, the affirmation is omitted, as when Jeremiah cries out in anguish to God: "O Yahweh, you deceived me, and I was deceived; / you overpowered me and prevailed" (20:7). Similarly audacious lines occur in other prayers of Jeremiah. "Will you be to me like a deceptive brook, /like a spring that fails?" he asks on one occasion (15:18). And on another he pleads, "Do not be a terror to me" (17:17).

In most Christian circles it would not be regarded as theologically correct to ascribe such deception and terror (in other words, evil) to God, yet such ascriptions are typical of the so-called "complaints" or "confessions" of Jeremiah which intersperse his prophetic oracles throughout the middle part of the book. These complaints fall into the literary genre of *lament*, a genre common also in the book of Job and in the Psalter. Indeed, more that one-third of all biblical psalms are either entirely or largely constituted by this genre.[21]

Such psalms are prayers which involve regressive speech, since the psalmist's situation is so desperate. Instead of opening with a piling up of reverential titles for God, such as Most High, Lord of Hosts, etc., lament psalms typically take a more direct approach: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1) Instead of praising God for his goodness evident in the world, lament psalms complain to God about what is wrong, usually in the psalmist's own life. And, perhaps, most significantly for our purposes, in lament psalms the supplicant often does not hesitate to accuse God directly of injustice or evil and ask for rescue from this intolerable situation.[22]

Although not all lament psalms directly implicate God in the suffering of the supplicant, Psalm 39:9–10 is not atypical.

> I was silent; I would not open my mouth,
> for you are the one who has done this.

[21] Bernhard W. Anderson lists sixty such psalms in Anderson 1983:239–42 ("Appendix B: Index of Psalms According to Type"). On the centrality of lament in Job, see Westermann 1977:vii. On Jeremiah's complaints, see Gerhard von Rad 1983:88–99.

[22] For an analysis of the typical components of a psalm of lament, see Brueggemann 1984:54–57 and Westermann 1981:52–71. Both Brueggemann and Westermann follow with modifications the ground-breaking form-critical work of Herman Gunkel on the psalms (see Gunkel and Begrich 1933; Gunkel 1967).

Remove your scourge from me;
I am overcome by the blow of your hand.

Such explicit accusations of God coupled with petition for rescue are found also in the book of Job. In the midst of Job's concluding speech in chapters 26–31 he prays:

I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer,
I stand up, but you merely look at me.
You turn on me ruthlessly;
with the might of your hand you attack me.
(Job 30:20–21)

But Job's accusation of God is not merely incidental. It is inextricably linked throughout the book with his protests about his own innocence, as, for example, in his response to Bildad in the second cycle of speeches.

Then know that God has wronged me
and drawn his net around me.
Though I cry "I've been wronged!" I get no response;
though I call for help, there is no justice.
He has blocked my way so I cannot pass;
he has shrouded my paths in darkness.
(Job 19:6–8)

Indeed, during his final speech Job protests his innocence with a telling oath:

As surely as God lives *who has denied me justice*,
the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul,
as long as I have life within me,
the breath of God in my nostrils,
my lips will not speak wickedness,
and my tongue will utter no deceit.
I will never admit you are in the right;
till I die, I will not deny my integrity.
I will maintain my righteousness
and never let go of it;
my conscience will not reproach me
as long as I live.
(Job 27:2–6)

There are two surprising points about these Joban texts. First of all, Job claims his integrity of speech while ascribing his suffering to the hand of God. We as readers, however, know from the prose prologue (chapters 1–2) that it is the hand of Satan that afflicts him. Yet even the prologue does not treat these as incompatible. There Satan tells God to stretch out *God's* hand to strike Job and God agrees by telling Satan that Job is in *Satan's* hand (Job 1:11–12; 2:5–6). Presumably if God is ultimately responsible for allowing Job's suffering, it would be quibbling to deny that such suffering was from God.

But the second surprising thing about Job's accusations is that he is never corrected or reprimanded by God about uttering them. On the contrary, at the end of the book Job is vindicated, while his friends, who had consistently upheld God's justice and accused Job of suffering deservedly, are reprimanded.

> After Yahweh had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because *you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has...* My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. *You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.*
>
> (Job 42:7–8)

It is interesting that in the epilogue the strictly orthodox speech of Job's friends is described as "folly" (*n^{e}bālāh*), whereas in the prologue Job describes his wife's urging him to curse God as "foolish" (from *nābāl*), the adjectival form of the same word (Job 2:10). A tension is therefore indicated in the very structure of the book between different directions in which speech for God may move. While it is clear that the option of cursing God is illegitimate and therefore not much attention is paid to it, the book of Job makes the profound statement that a rationalistic orthodoxy which seeks to have the relationship of God's justice to suffering and evil neatly packaged is also inappropriate.[23] Could the greater good defense be considered a variety of this rationalistic folly?

[23] While differing on some of the interpretive details, Terrence Tilley nevertheless comes to a conclusion about Job similar to my own, suggesting that the book warns us against inappropriate ways of speaking about God (Tilley 1991:109–110).

The way of wisdom, however, is the way of lament. Far from being condemned here, prayerful struggle with God about perceived injustice is vindicated—even if it means persistently questioning God's justice in the context of a faithful relationship of trust. The question of Job, as Gustavo Gutierrez frames it in his insightful commentary on the book, is "the question of *how we are to talk about God.* More particularly: how we are to talk about God from within a specific situation—namely, the suffering of the innocent" (Gutierrez 1987:xviii; his emphasis).

Of course, Job does not lament forever. After Yahweh speaks to him from the whirlwind (chapters 38–41), Job repents "*of* (not *in*) dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Although this is a notoriously difficult verse to interpret, it has been suggested that its meaning is that Job changed his mind about his stance of dust and ashes, that is, about his complaining or lament, and moved on to praise and thanksgiving—though only after a profoundly personal, yet numinous encounter with God.[24]

The point of the book of Job, however, is not simply that one should move on from lament to praise. That point would not have required so long and torturous a book, meandering as it does between Job's nine speeches and those of his three friends (three speeches each, except for the third, Zophar, whose final speech is missing either by intent or textual corruption). The speeches of Job's friends drive him to increasing degrees of frustration as they rehearse the old truisms about suffering as punishment for sin or discipline for growth. (Could it be that Zophar's third speech is missing because he simply ran out of steam?) Even the introduction of a fourth character, Elihu, with an inordinately lengthy speech (chapters 32–37), following Job's reduction to silence, adds nothing essentially new.[25]

[24] The text of 42:6 literally says "of" or "concerning" (*'al*) dust and ashes, and not "in" dust and ashes, as most English translations have it. On this, see Patrick 1976:369–71, Habel 1985:583, Curtis 1979:497–511, and Wolters 1990:116–19. Even if Wolters's textual emendation of one vowel is correct—such that "of" (*'al*) becomes "a child [of]" (*'ul*)—this does not substantially alter my point, that Job does not simply repent of his lament, since it is his *speech* that is explicitly vindicated by God (42:7–8).

[25] On Elihu, I am in agreement with Pope 1975:xxix-xxx, contra Hengstenberg 1972:105–6, who believes Elihu's speech contains the key to the message of the book.

Indeed, if there is an aesthetic correspondence of form and content here, the very length and repetitiveness of the dialogue may indicate that the book of Job is about the torturous *process* of moving from the disorienting shock of experienced evil, through its articulation in lament (with its dimensions of grief and complaint), to a new orientation that neither denies nor forgets evil, yet does not allow it to have the final word. This process is rendered particularly difficult in the face of an orthodoxy which seeks to stymie the first move by defending God at all costs, even at the cost of denying the evil one is experiencing.[26]

Biblical Versus Classical Theodicy

Although there are many more biblical texts that could be adduced, these are sufficient to elucidate a basic biblical approach to evil, even, perhaps, a biblical approach to theodicy.[27] But it is an approach fundamentally at variance with the greater good defense. Indeed it is difficult to imagine how any proponent of the greater good defense could do justice to biblical texts such as those cited. These texts and classical theodicies seem to inhabit different conceptual worlds altogether. And if a theodicy fails to do justice to a central strand of biblical texts, its claim to do justice (*díkē*) to God (*théos*)—who, Christians confess, is revealed in these texts—is seriously in doubt.

[26] For an illuminating discussion of orientation/disorientation/new orientation as a grid for interpreting the Psalter, see Brueggemann 1984:19–23. Brueggemann has also examined more formally the central hermeneutical significance of the tension between orientation and disorientation within the Old Testament as a whole (Brueggemann 1985, 1985b). On the fruitfulness of Brueggemann's hermeneutical grid for understanding popular culture and the crisis of modernity, see Middleton and Walsh 1993 and Middleton and Walsh 1995, which are indebted to his categories. For an analysis of the limitations of Brueggemann's hermeneutics, however, see Middleton 1994a (and Brueggemann 1994 for his response).

[27] Other relevant biblical texts include the book of Lamentations and the prayers of Moses embedded in the Pentateuchal narratives. On these prayers, see Balentine 1985. Balentine's concluding comment could be applied equally to all of the texts we have examined: "In this respect prayer emerges as an important resource, heretofore little appropriated, for understanding the various concerns relating to theodicy in the Old Testament" (1985:72).

The second problem, therefore, with the greater good defense is that it does not take the Scriptures seriously enough. At least it does not take seriously that strand within Scripture which articulates and embraces pain and is ruthlessly honest about suffering.[28]

This is not to say that there is no continuity whatsoever between the Bible and classical theodicy. One point of overlap which they do share (and that distinguishes them from process theodicies) is that in both the omnipotence or sovereignty of God is affirmed. The genre of lament is predicated on the expectation that God can and will rescue the supplicant. While this does not exactly amount to the philosophical doctrine of omnipotence as propounded by classical theism and as utilized in the greater good defense, it does imply sufficient power on God's part to eliminate evil. This, taken together with the supplicant's accusation that God has permitted or caused the evil in question, strongly suggests that on the point of God's sovereignty the Bible sides with classical theism and not process thought.[29]

Nevertheless, it is the *differences* between the greater good defense and the Bible that are striking. If the biblical genre of lament may be said to embody a "theodicy," then that theodicy may be fruitfully contrasted with the greater good defense.

[28] Walter Brueggemann has extensively and fruitfully explored this strand within the Old Testament prophets in a number of accessible studies. See his classic statement in Brueggemann 1978: 44–61 (chap. 3: "Prophetic Criticizing and the Embrace of Pathos"), as well as Brueggemann 1986 and Brueggemann 1982:40–66 (chap. 3: "The Disruption for Justice").

[29] Whether a strong sense of God's sovereignty or omnipotence is ubiquitous in Scripture is a complicated question, for it involves a whole cluster of issues that cannot be addressed in any detail here. These include the typical biblical emphasis on human agency and responsibility, alongside a range of texts that seem to indicate God overriding such agency by hardening people's hearts (for example, Exodus 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17; Joshua 11:20; Isaiah 6:9–10, quoted in Mark 4:11–12 and Acts 28:26–27; Romans 9:16–18, 22–23; 11:7–8). Many of these texts, like the genre of lament, tend to ascribe what we would regard as evil to God's direct agency. Other texts make universal ascriptions of both good and evil to God (for example, Job 2:10; Lamentations 3:38; Isaiah 45:7; cf. 1 Samuel 2:6; 16:14–23; Amos 3:6), while parallel texts ascribe the same action first to God (2 Samuel 24:1), then to Satan (1 Chronicles 21:1). Interesting substantive studies on the above issues include Carson 1981; Lindström 1983; Kluger 1967; and Fretheim 1984:60–78 (chap. 5: "God and World: Presence and Power").

Whereas theodicy texts in the classical tradition take the form of apologetics and attempt to defend God's justice, biblical theodicy texts take the form of prayer (or at least alternate between prayer and other forms of complaint) and question, even assail, God's justice. Whereas in classical theodicy God is discussed abstractly in the third person and the apologist is expected to answer to others about God, in biblical theodicy God is addressed in direct second person speech and is expected to answer the supplicant. Whereas classical theodicy results, I have argued, in deception about the nature of evil and leads to passivity *vis-à-vis* the status quo, biblical theodicy is radically honest about evil, is rooted in passion, and questions the present social arrangements in the world.[30]

Biblical theodicy, therefore, is not content with contemplation—neither the rational contemplation of philosophical arguments nor the contemplation of prayer, even lament. Such theodicy thus moves from lament, not only to thanksgiving and praise (that is, to celebration and anticipation of God's coming shalom), but also to discipleship and ethical action—to practical engagement with the world animated by a vision of that shalom.

Lament, Trust and the Processing of Evil

But these moves are neither immediate nor easy. Job's move from complaint to thanksgiving does not come until the forty-second (and final) chapter of the book. Like Job, most psalms of lament also evidence a shift in perspective and conclude in thanksgiving for rescue experienced or anticipated. Psalms 39 and 88 are, however, two glaring exceptions in that no such move comes within the body of either psalm. Both of these psalms push the lament form to the boundary.

Although in both cases the supplicants continually cry out to God with increasing passion for healing, Psalm 39 ends not in praise, but with the desperate plea, "Look away from me, that I may rejoice again" (verse 13), while Psalm 88 ends in darkness. Its last poignant words are:

[30] On the insightful connection between theodicy and the legitimation or critique of social power arrangements both in the Bible and in the contemporary world, see Brueggemann 1984:168–76 (chap. 5: "A Retrospect: Spirituality and Theodicy") and Berger 1967:53–80 (chap. 3: "The Problem of Theodicy").

> Your wrath has swept over me;
> your terrors have destroyed me.
> All day long they surround me like a flood;
> they have completely engulfed me.
> You have taken my companions and loved ones from me;
> the darkness is closest friend
> (Ps 88:16–18).

The psalmist is simply being true to experience. Evil, seemingly from the hand of God, is what he knows. Salvation has not yet appeared. So the prayer ends honestly, in the darkness.

Yet neither Psalm 39 nor 88 is a prayer of despair. On the contrary, they are—like all prayers of lament—bold acts of trust and hope. Such prayer, even when it is a lament at the extremity, on the boundary of despair, nevertheless *addresses God*. Here the psalmists put their experience of evil and the moral incoherence of the world at the feet of Yahweh in the form of prayer. It is not simply that the act of articulating pain brings order out of chaos or that voicing pain as one's own is cathartic. This is undoubtedly true.[31]

But the hope intrinsic to lament is found in the fact that even at the extremity, the psalmist refuses to give up on God. Having looked fully into the abyss, the psalmist now looks to God—*from* the abyss. Lament thus combines, paradoxically, both uncompromising honesty about evil—including the suspicion that God, because God is sovereign, might be at fault—and trust in that same God.

This paradoxical stance is illustrated in an illuminating rabbinic story about the Holocaust told by Elie Wiesel.

> Three rabbis—all erudite and pious men—decided one winter evening to indict God for allowing His children to be massacred.... after the trial at which God was found guilty as charged, one of the rabbis looked at the watch he had somehow been able to preserve in the kingdom of night, and said: "Oy! It's time for prayers." And the three

[31] As Michael Fishbane puts it, "speech organizes the swirl of indiscriminate sounds and silence, and creates a world—a cosmos—with words" (Fishbane 1979:100). Brueggemann has explored how the lament form of prayer gives shape to suffering, in Brueggemann 1977.

> rabbis—"all erudite and pious men"—bowed their heads and prayed (Brown 1983:154).

Such spirituality is, I maintain, not foreign to a biblical faith nurtured in the gritty genre of lament.

But prayers of lament transcend despair in yet another way, that goes beyond the trust expressed or implied by the act of prayer. Lament psalms have their roots, ultimately, in the exodus, the central and founding event of the Old Testament, when Yahweh delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Central to the story as it is told in the Bible is the Israelites' primal scream of pain to God. Between centuries of accumulated suffering and God's decisive intervention, we find this remarkable statement:

> The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.
> (Exodus 2:23–25)

This agonized cry of pain at the heart of the exodus echoes resoundingly throughout the psalms of lament. Lament is redemptive, therefore, not simply because the supplicant clings to God in desperate faith, but more fundamentally because lament is rooted in the very pattern of the biblical story, at the hinge between bondage and deliverance. This is true both in the Old Testament and in the New. For as the Gospels tell it, Jesus prayed on the cross a psalm of lament: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22:1) In the words of the Apostles' Creed, he "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, buried, he descended into hell." The passion of Jesus, as portrayed in the New Testament, was a spiraling descent into the abyss of abandonment and suffering. And from the abyss Jesus, like the psalmists before him, looked to God. And three days after his lament—his cry of abandonment on the cross—God acted decisively, defeating the power of death and raising him from the grave.

This biblical model of the move from bondage to deliverance and from cross to resurrection constitutes for Jews and Christians a grounding for eschatological hope. It is this hope that is structurally anticipated in the typical intra-psalmic move from lament to praise. This hope is further

echoed in both Lukan and Matthean versions of Jesus' beatitudes: "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh" (Luke 6:21); "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:5). Indeed, the notion of Christ's resurrection as the "first fruits" of the new creation (1 Corinthians 15:20–24) encourages Christians daringly to expect a transformation of the abyss into the Kingdom of God.

Yet eschatological hope can sometimes be cold comfort to those suffering in boundary situations of the abyss, especially if that suffering seems interminable as in Psalms 39 and 88, or in the book of Job before Yahweh's intervention. The heightened contrast between future promise and present reality can, in fact, intensify suffering and serve to foster despair.

There are important biblical indications, however, that there is hope and comfort in the cross itself, a hope and a comfort that do not depend exclusively on the eschatological anticipation of resurrection. What is only dimly foreshadowed and hinted at in Old Testaments texts such as the fourth servant song of Isaiah (52:13–53:12) and the strange shift of person within Jeremiah from the prophet's lament to God's anguished utterances of sorrow over the people's sin (for example, the prophet: 8:12–9:2, 13:17; God: 14:17–18), becomes explicit in the gospel.[32] The New Testament boldly proclaims what is no less a mystery for all the boldness of the proclamation, that God has personally known the darkness. "God was in Christ," asserts the apostle (2 Corinthians 5:19), poured out in compassion on behalf of the world, suffering with us and for us—bearing the weight of our own evil.[33]

[32] On the theme of God's pathos in the Old Testament, see Fretheim 1984, and the older but seminal work Robinson 1955. On God's pathos in the prophetic literature, see Heschel 1953 and Heschel 1962.

[33] In one of the many poignant stories he relates in *Night*, Elie Wiesel tells of the torture and then public hanging by the SS of a young boy who was beloved of all the prisoners. When the noose was placed around his neck, Wiesel heard someone behind him ask, "Where is God? Where is He?" Half-an-hour after the chair was tipped over the boy was still alive, dying in silent agony due to his light body weight. Observing him, Wiesel heard the same voice behind him asking, "'Where is God now?' And I heard a voice within me answer him: 'Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows'" (Wiesel 1982:61–62). From the perspective of biblical faith, perhaps Wiesel's answer was truer than he knew.

The passion of Christ, and—through Christ—of *God*, thus constitutes the genuinely intrinsic hope of biblical lament. It is a hope rooted not in apologetic argument, but in the love of God, as the link between *pathos* and *compassion* aptly illustrates. Instead of a rational solution to a philosophical problem, Scripture offers us nothing less than the participation of God in our sufferings. Although this is, of course, never divorced from the promise of resurrection, it may be that in the most extreme boundary situations of evil it is this compassionate participation in our sufferings, and not hope of God's eschatological victory, that renders faith—even in the abyss—a live option.

Beyond the negative claim, then, that the greater good defense is untenable as a solution to the problem of evil, this paper proposes that the Scriptures contain the resources and provide a paradigm for our existential struggle with evil. In particular, the genre of lament articulates what may be termed an alternative theodicy, which allows for the processing of the disorientation that arises from the lived experience of evil (Middleton 1994c).

CONCLUSION

Far from constituting a "solution" to the problem of evil, biblical theodicy represents an intensification of the problem, in that it allows for, even calls for, questioning of God's justice. If the major negative conclusion of this paper stands—concerning the failure of the greater good defense—it then becomes an open question whether the problem of evil can ever be rationally solved. Indeed, without denying the reality of *genuine evil* (as classical theodicy implicitly does by the greater good defense) or the *omnipotence of God* (as process theodicy explicitly does by its redefinition of divine power), the theodicy problem looks logically intractable.[34]

It might be suggested, on the basis of the audacious texts cited in this paper, that a biblical theodicy ought to resolve the problem of evil by denying not God's omnipotence, but God's *goodness*, but this does not seem adequate to the biblical witness, which tirelessly proclaims the goodness and trustworthiness of God. The fact that this pervasive proclamation

[34] The varieties of theodicy in process thought is a topic outside the scope of this paper. On this see Griffin 1976 and Whitney 1985.

exists side by side (in tension, certainly) with the genre of lament, suggests that the reification into a doctrine of a supplicant's questioning of God's justice is inappropriate. Such reification ignores the dialogical context of prayer in which the questioning occurs.[35] The suspicion, therefore, that God might not be good may legitimately be voiced *to God*, but is illegitimate as a systematic theological statement.[36]

It is thus difficult to resist the conclusion that the theodicy problem constitutes a rational *aporia,* which itself exacerbates the problem of evil for those who are interested—as I am—in theological rationality. This suggests one final criticism that may be made about the greater good defense (a criticism which may apply equally to process theodicy), namely, that it takes rationality far too seriously, privileging the deliverances of first-order logic over the testimony of both experience and the Scriptures. If indeed we are confronted with the dilemma of either 1) concocting a morally sufficient reason for God to allow evil in order to render God's goodness and power logically compatible with the existence of evil, thus "solving" the theodicy problem,[37] or 2) rejecting entirely the possibility of its rational solution, I believe we must choose the latter. For why must we have rational consistency at all costs? Logic is certainly an important value, but is it the most important value in all situations?[38] Perhaps, like Job, who

[35] On the dialogic, covenantal character of relationship to the biblical God, which invites lament and complaint, see Middleton and Walsh 1995:165, 185–86.

[36] The systematization of this suspicion is precisely the problem in the theodicies of John Roth and Fredrick Sontag, included as chapters 1 and 5 in Davis 1981. It also mars the otherwise provocative exploration in Blumenthal 1993. For one of the earliest and most famous accounts of God as evil, see Jung 1969. Also relevant to this question are Carson 1981; Lindström 1983; Kluger 1967; and Fretheim 1984.

[37] Or even concocting the notion that there must be such a reason, whether or not we know what it is.

[38] In particular, two considerations may be advanced in support of not holding fast to logical consistency in the case of theodicy. The first is that language about God is typically subject, as Ian Ramsey has extensively shown, to what he calls "logical impropriety" or oddness. That is, our speech about God is not always subject to standard logical rules (Ramsey 1957:53, 103, 105, 110, 123, *et passim*). This, combined with the consideration that evil may well be absurd, and thus ultimately inexplicable, converges on an aporetic conclusion to the theodicy problem.

even after his encounter with God received no rational justification of his sufferings, we need to live with a healthy dose of agnosticism concerning theodicy.

This does not mean that we should never grapple intellectually with the problem of evil. There is certainly no scriptural or other warrant for heading off a budding theodicist at the pass with *a priori* warning that the way is blocked. Indeed, the example of Job suggests that the aporetic nature of the theodicy problem is something to be learned by experience, through genuine struggle, and not proclaimed at the outset by fiat. Rational attempts to solve the problem of evil, like the torturous process of Job's lament, may be the only way to come to an honest understanding of the logical insolubility of the problem, in much the same way as Job—through the crucible of his experience—came to an acknowledgement of the inscrutability of the ways of God. The only warning sign necessary for an intrepid traveler is the rigorous condition that, like Job, one speak the truth about God, and—I would add—about evil.

Biblical theodicy thus provides an alternative, not only to classical theodicy, which expects a neatly packaged rational solution to the problem of evil, but also to the premature appeal to mystery, coupled with a simplistic call to believe without trying to understand.[39] Biblical theodicy allows—even expects—one to move from untested faith to understanding, without any guarantees, however, that such understanding is attainable or indeed that faith will remain unchanged. Yet even the failure of understanding remains within the context of a God-relationship and can itself be articulated in lament.

But the failure of understanding in the realm of theodicy is not real failure. Despite its interim success and widespread popularity, it is the greater good defense that ultimately fails precisely for maintaining a semblance of rationality when the admission of ignorance would be more honest. Indeed, if the account of theodicy presented in this paper stands, the question arises as to why God allowed the greater good defense to be so suc-

[39] Barry Whitney refers to this latter option as the "faith solution" and rightly judges it inadequate (Whitney 1989:8–16). Whitney wrongly, however, attributes this solution both to the book of Job (see my discussion above) and to Paul's acknowledgement in Romans 11:33 of God's ultimate inscrutability (p. 27). What Whitney does not seem to realize is that Paul's acknowledgement comes at the *conclusion* of three chapters (Romans 9–11) of his struggle with the theodicy problem in relation to the question of Jewish unbelief.

cessful. Far from constituting a solution to the problem of evil, the greater good defense, on the contrary, is part of the problem. The question for our theodicy thus becomes: Why would a good God allow the greater good defense? This question, too, must be taken up into our lament.

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Lament and the Transformation of God
Response to J. Richard Middleton

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Richard Middleton has highlighted the significance of lament in the Bible, a genre whose frequent occurrence in the text necessitates its discussion in any biblical theology. Biblical faith is a faith that laments—that pours out grief to God and complains to God.[1] The discipline of theology and the practice of spirituality must take lament more seriously. Instead of shying away from it because it skews a system of an omnipotent and loving God, Middleton emphasizes that it should be dealt with directly. He properly understands lament to be a bold act of faith. It takes evil seriously and brings a complaint or lament about evil to the only one who can change things. As such, lament expresses deep trust in God.

A salient feature of lament is transformatoin. Usually found within a lament is a dramatic change of mood—a sudden shift from deep despair to thanksgiving, usually including a vow of praise.[2] Psalms 88 and 39 are exceptions of course, but most laments contain this shift. Take, for in-

[1] In the English-speaking world, the stress on lament is most familiar in the works of Claus Westermann (e.g., 1974:20–38) and Walter Brueggemann (e.g., 1986:57–71 and 1974:3–19). Recently, reproaches against God found in Egyptian and Babylonian texts (including Ipuwer, Merikare, Sumerian Job, and Ludlul bel nemeqi) have been analyzed by Dorothea Sitzler (1995). Her conclusions, such as identifying the one who reproaches God to be an "ideal type" (*Ideal typ*) of loyalty, rather than a righteous sufferer, and that these texts focus on the loyalty of God and not world order (1995:231–33), are particularly germane to this discussion.

[2] Although a rigid schema of the elements in lament psalms is often too constrictive to incorporate all examples of the genre, some that evidence such a shift include Pss 6, 13, 22, 28, 31, 54, 56, 59, 61, 69, 102, 109, and 130.

stance, Psalm 13. It begins with an individual crying, "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?... How long must I have sorrow in my heart all day long?" It goes on in a similar vein until, suddenly, the lamenter announces, "But I trust in your steadfast love, and my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD because he has dealt bountifully with me."

How does this transformation happen? How is it that lament and thanksgiving follow one another so closely?

There has been no lack of scholarly opinion on this matter. One major approach connects the change in mood with worship in the cult. In the gap between despair and praise there has been some kind of intervention, such as the priest giving an oracle foretelling deliverance. The praise is thus a response to the oracle.[3] However, although the Bible may preserve such oracles in the famous "Fear not" passages of Isaiah and Jeremiah,[4] they are now suspiciously dislocated from the laments in the Psalter.[5] They must be read into the gap between the verses of despair and of praise. In addition to this conspicuous absence, there is also a lack of psalms that could be used in the case of an unfavorable oracle. It is probable that the priest could not always speak a good word—yet this scenario always assumes a positive word from the Lord.

Psalm 73 points to another solution for the change in mood. According to this psalm, complaints about how well the wicked live and how the righteous are punished are dramatically silenced when the psalmist "went into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived the end of the wicked." Within the context of the cult, the worshiper has a change of perspective. She sings to God, "Truly you set [the wicked] in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin" (Ps 73:17,18). It must be said, however, that this solution applies only to one psalm and is more typical of wisdom literature than psalmic lament.

[3] This solution was proposed by Küchler (1918:285–301) and followed (with some modifications) by scholars such Gunkel and Begrich (1933:245–47; cf. Berich 1934:81–92); and Mowinckel (1921–24:1.147ff.; 3.64ff., 101ff; and 1962:1.217ff.; 2.58ff.).

[4] Examples of such salvation oracles are found in Isa 44:2; 41:10; Jer 30:10–11; 46:27.

[5] Texts in the psalter that are used to defend a salvation oracle are Pss 12:5; 21:8–12; 35:3; 60:6–8; 62:11–12; 91:14–16; and 108:7–9. It is suspicious that none of these psalms have a sudden shift in mood from lament/complaint to praise.

A solution that is more representative of the genre has to do with the rhetorical function of history. The recitation of God's saving acts[6] in the past produces the confidence that the present evil will be overcome. Remembering how Yahweh went through the sea with lightning and thunder, and led the people "like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Ps 77:20) could conceivably give way to faith and produce the shift from lament to praise.

Like the other solutions, this one limits the change of mood to the interior life of the psalmist. This is unfortunate, since it is impossible to confine the transformation found in the lament psalms to the mind of the individual worshiper or even the corporate body of worshipers. Many lament psalms seek to transform the heart of God; they ask God to remove the suffering and bring deliverance.

For instance, although some of the psalms with historical reflections may have produced a renewal of trust in God, more often than not these psalms indict God. Reciting these saving deeds may seem like praise, but such recitation functions to contrast the glorious past with the depressing present. The past serves as precedent, and the community can thus complain to God when the saving deeds are not continued. For instance, Psalm 126 begins with the remembrance "When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, then we were like those who dreamed..." The psalm goes on to extol the deeds of God in the past, but suddenly the historical remembrance is repeated as a plea: "Restore, O LORD, our fortunes" (Ps 126:4). The repetition of the phrase highlights the fact that God's past acts have not been maintained. The historical deed must be completed; God must live up to what has been initiated. On the basis of what God has promised, the community prays that the past will be realized more completely in the future. The bliss that God enacted proves evanescent and the effect is heightened pathos.

Psalm 89 is another example of this phenomenon. This text can be divided into three main parts: praise of God with a description of God's power, God's choice of David and David's house, and God's rejection of David and David's house. Parallel vocabulary and imagery emphasize how God elevated David to a status comparable to God's own, but was then faithless to this act of elevation. In the middle section, God promises that

[6] Westermann has pointed out the frequent reference to God's saving deeds in the past within the genre of pslamic lament (1977:41–42 = 1981:55–57).

"my hand shall always remain with [David]; my army also shall strengthen him...I will crush his foes before him. My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him" (vv. 19–24). Yet in the final section of the psalm, we hear how God has rejected David, how "[David] has become the scorn of his neighbors" and how God has "made all [David's] enemies rejoice" (v. 42). The faithful God who "exalted" David in verse 19 "exalts" the right hand of David's foes in verse 42. This is not historical description for description's sake. Clearly, the past functions here to indict God. In Psalm 89, just as in Psalm 129 and other lament psalms, history acts as a kind of lever to move God to bring about salvation again.

Besides the recitation of history, other tacks are employed in the lament psalms to transform the heart of God. For instance, God is threatened with cessation of praise. In Psalm 30 the psalmist reminds God that the death of a worshiper inevitably involves the snuffing out of a voice of praise. The psalmist asks, "what profit is there in my death? Will the dust praise you?" (30:8) Other psalms focus on human frailty. In painful detail the sufferer in Psalm 22 complains that "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death" (22:14–15). This is not mere description—its pathetic picture aims to move God to change the situation. Frailty in the ethical realm, which is innate to human nature, is appealed to in Psalm 130: "If the LORD marked all done amiss, who could stand?" (v. 3)

Another tactic is the appeal to God's reputation, both within the covenant community and without. In Psalm 74, the scoffing of the enemies and their sense of victory after they have destroyed the house of Yahweh is counted on to move God to put things right. The psalm also contains the cry that God "have regard for [the] covenant" (74:20). If God is not to look like one who reneges on promises, then God must move to alleviate the situation of distress. Frankly, God looks bad, and only if God changes the situation can God's reputation be salvaged.

Finally, it has recently been suggested that the change of mood in the psalms also functions to motivate God (Cartledge 1987:77–94). The vow of praise at the end of the psalm moves God to respond to the appeal since it shows confidence in God's ability to rescue. The final vow is a promise—it will be enacted once God responds favorably. This is similar to how Hannah promised God that if she was granted a son, he would be dedi-

cated as a Nazirite, partaking neither of wine, intoxicants, or haircuts (1 Sam 1:11). Similarly, the vow of praise is a holy promise—a promise that is also an assertion of trust that God will change the dire circumstances faced in the present. As such, the change in mood is not a change in function but simply a continuation of the appeal.

The emphasis on the transformation of God's heart, or at least God's present activity, must be taken seriously in any discussion on theodicy. While Middleton does admit that laments move God to work deliverance (Exodus 1) and the "audacious texts" show that God needs reminding about right and wrong, I would want to emphasize this even more strongly. It is too benign to consider lament a hinge between despair and deliverance—the laments assume causational power.

Admittedly, this view of the lament psalms casts doubt on the adequacy of the traditional doctrine of God's impassability. According to the lament psalms, God is not impassive or detached. God is not an abstract "first cause" or "primary mover." God, as revealed in the scriptures, is not only a parental figure or king, but also a lover. God is tumultuously involved in God's creation in an emotional manner and not above the fray of emotional entanglement and rhetorical argumentation.

Although God's impassability may be questioned, God's sovereignty is not. Expecting God to be moved by the protestations of the worshiper does not take away God's strength. The assumption that it is only God who can change despair and agony is never in question. A God whose heart can be transformed is still a God of power.

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Christian Responses To Evil
An Appeal for Interfaith Dialogue
Response to J. Richard Middleton

MARY SCHALLER BLAUFUSS

"Biblical theodicy allows—even expects—one to move from untested faith to understanding, without any guarantees, however, that such understanding is attainable or indeed that faith will remain unchanged," claims J. Richard Middleton. His paper refuting "greater good" versions of theodicy in light of the biblical genre of lament raises very valid criticisms about the way Western Christian theologies have been created and challenges us to embrace the experiential honesty of the writers of biblical lament. The strength of Middleton's paper is his insistence on the real life experience of suffering as the focus of theodicy over against the criteria of logic and reason employed by classical Western theodicies. I was particularly struck by the dialogue with Jewish people through which he emphasizes the need to take seriously the experience of evil. In fact, the stories of three different Jewish persons serve as his transition from an overview of the literature of classical theodicy to his interpretation of biblical lament as a way to grapple with evil in the midst of relationship with God. In light of this powerful dialogue with people of the Jewish faith I wish to push Middleton's method one step further and encourage Christians to dialogue with people of a variety of other faiths in the articulation of Christian responses to the reality of evil.

Several things in Middleton's paper lead me to advocate interfaith dialogue to help Christian faith make sense of evil in today's world. One of

Middleton's main points is that the "greater good defense" does not take seriously enough people's experience of evil and suffering. Part of taking experience seriously is paying attention to the fact that we live in a religiously pluralistic world and one in which people of those religions frequently interact. For example, people who experience evil and suffering are certainly not limited to those within Judeo or Western Christian cultures. Middleton refers to the 1991 Gulf War as an example of the failure of both the "greater good" theodicy and its parallel "just war theory." With the exception of soldiers who happened to be Christian or a few Iraqi Christians, most Christian reflection on the suffering incurred in that situation happened from our armchairs as we watched the carefully controlled television reports. Most of the innocent sufferers, who were in the buildings that were bombed or who suffered hunger during the ensuing boycott of foodstuffs to Iraq embraced one of several versions of the Islamic faith. Gustavo Gutierrez, to whom Middleton refers, asserts that we need to talk about God from the specific situation of the suffering of the innocent (1987: xviii). I do not believe Gutierrez means to limit this arena of God-talk to innocent Christians. One of my own personal concerns is the widespread poverty in India which continues even fifty years after national independence. Among the things my pre-school aged daughters and I pray for at night are children in India who go to bed hungry. However, unless we are in relationship with those hungry people and in living dialogue with the Hindu traditions and understandings of divinity that constitute their worldview, our prayers risk becoming a patronizing pity-party rather than intercessions that allow us to participate in change.

My call for interfaith dialogue in approaching the problem of evil in Christian theology is also prompted by Middleton's own dialogue with John Hick as a representative writer of classical theodicy and the presuppositions about the nature of God that both Middleton and Hick share. One of the advantages of an inter-disciplinary forum such as this is the cross-fertilization of ideas and experiences. Whereas Middleton refers to John Hick's early work in the Western philosophic and theological tradition, most of my connection with Hick has involved his work after a self-avowed "conversion to a pluralist theology of religions" in 1967 (1982: 5). Hick defines the central problem of theodicy in his early book, *Evil and the God of Love,* as follows: "Can the presence of evil in the world be reconciled with the existence of a God who is unlimited both in goodness and in power?" (1966: 3) In his later work, *God and the Universe of*

Faiths, Hick claims to have initiated a "Copernican Revolution" in theology whereby Christians "shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realisation that it is God who is at the centre, and that all religions,... including our own, serve and revolve around him" (1973: 131). He names his new approach "theocentric" and bases it on the understanding of a God of universal love. Hick's answer to the plurality of religions is that there is one Divine Reality which exists in the noumenal rather than the phenomenal world and that all religious traditions and names for God revolve around this reality.

Although Hick would like to separate the two phases of his life's work, I contend that the concept of God in both his early and late work is similar. A critique of his theology of religions, therefore, also questions his presupposition of a god unlimited in goodness and power that undergirds his early work and supports the versions of classical theodicy Middleton claims use the "greater good" defense. I agree with Gavin D'Costa who argues that "in trying to escape a normative Christocentrism, he [Hick] replaced it with a normative theocentrism, when in fact that very theocentrism relied implicitly on a form of normative Christocentrism" (1986: 31). Hick's early Irenaean theodicy and later theocentrism are both based on the concept of a transcendent being which creates the world and then steps back to let the process unfold. This accounts for the possibility of evil as well as for the different ways in which religions respond to what Hick calls the central reality of the single universe of faiths. Middleton accepts Hick's understanding of the nature of God when he writes, "Whereas the motivation of the greater good defense is admirable in that it attempts to retain an orthodox doctrine of God as both good and providentially sovereign in the face of evident evil, it is the strategy that is problematic" (1997: 4).

More than Hick's work with religious plurality, however, I am most influenced by those who emphasize the discontinuity between different religions rather than their continuity; and who point out the differences among religious understandings, even of the nature of God. John A. Robinson, for example, helps emphasize the role of dialogue in the midst of such religious diversity.[1] He advocates "inner dialogue" as a precondi-

[1] Christians of various cultures are involved in interfaith dialogue and advocate its role in the creation of Christian theology. I have chosen to refer to three Western Christians in this paper because of my own identity as a West-

tion of "outer dialogue" (1979).[2] As a retired English Anglican bishop, Robinson traveled to India to explore "the tension between two centres which are to be found in different degree within all our spiritual traditions and indeed within each one of us" (1979: 8). He based his search on the difference he observed between the centers of various religions. Martin Buber, who is Jewish, and Shankara, an eighth century Hindu philosopher, represent the two poles of this difference. Buber's religious center is illustrated by the phrase "I-Thou relationship." Although in this relationship, Buber understands a definite difference between the creator and creation, the goal of this relationship is communion. At the other pole, Shankara's religious center is illustrated by the phrase from the *Chandogya Upanishad*, "*tat tvam asi*" ("That Art Thou"). Shankara emphasizes the goal of life as realizing that no separation actually exists and that ultimate reality is union with the divine (1979: 9–10). I agree with Robinson that the boundaries between these two poles are not absolute. They do, however, help describe the very real differences present in our world of religious plurality. The title of Robinson's resulting book, *Truth Is Two-Eyed,* illustrates his observation that Westerners have a myopic vision of reality and need to study a tradition in which the other eye dominates in order to correct that vision. Inner and outer dialogue are necessary because "the two centres also stand in need of each other if justice is to be done to the polarities of experience" (1979: 14).

Robinson affirms that God is present in other religions and that we need to be open to that presence. As an inclusivist,[3] however, he insists on the finality and superiority of Christ and thus places some presuppositions

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ern Christian and the similar issues we face. I do believe, however, that Christians need to dialogue with each other across cultures every bit as much as to dialogue with non-Christians. This is the creative future of Christian theology.

[2] cf. Murray Rogers "Hindu and Christian—A Moment Breaks," *Inter-Religious Dialogue,* ed. Jai Singh (Bangalore, 1967): 111–17.

[3] The exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist categorization of approaches to religious diversity has emerged as standard. Diana Eck defines the categories as follows: Exclusivists hold to the sole truth of their own religious tradition to the exclusion of all others. Inclusivists see the other religious traditions in their own and interpret the others' faith in their own terms. Plurarists accept the fact that many voices will speak in the exploration of religious truth, each in its own terms (1993: xiii).

about God off-limits even as he enters dialogue. Pluralist Diana Eck extends the possibilities of dialogue further than does Robinson. She teaches about India and comparative religions at Harvard University and formerly headed the World Council of Churches Working Group on Dialogue With People of Living Faiths. In her book *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*, she writes:

> In the give and take of dialogue, understanding one another leads to mutual self-understanding, and finally to mutual transformation. My encounter with Hindus has enabled me to understand my own faith more clearly and has required that I understand my own faith differently (1993: xii).

When dialogue means that we are open to new understandings and possible transformations even of our concepts of God's nature, then this interaction with other religions challenges the starting point and very basis of classical theodicy—a god who is unlimited in the Western rationalistic sense of goodness and power. This challenge necessitates that we no longer accept the "greater good" defense of classical theodicy as a given of Christian theology, but place it within the dialogue as we continue to try to understand the complex relation between God and evil.

A final aspect of Middleton's paper which leads me to encourage interfaith dialogue as integral to Christian theology is his emphasis on Scripture's response to evil and suffering. I advocate interfaith dialogue because I believe it is consistent with the process of biblical development. In his work on " The Foundations for Mission in the Old Testament," Carroll Stuhlmueller points out that throughout their history Israel acted and reacted to Canaanite forms of worship and lifestyle. Stuhlmueller claims, for example, that Israel achieved an integral wholeness between itself and world of nature centered in YHWH by combining Canaanite and Mosaic influences. "Israel used Canaanite culture to express a personal god, used loan words or phrases from Canaanite religion and tolerated veiled polytheism in order to keep the universe charged with divine wonder" (1983: 116). "Israelites drew upon Canaanite language to appreciate the depth and force of their own religion" (1983: 117). Donald Senior shows similar interaction between religions and cultures in the development of the New Testament. Although Senior admits that the New Testament's explicit evaluation of other religions tends to be negative, he

does claim that Christianity developed through its interaction with other religions and cultures. He points out that early Gnosticism and mystic cults left their imprint on Christian thought and practice. Paul was influenced by popular forms of Stoicism and John's gospel was created in dialogue with proto-Gnostic motifs (1983: 345). Our biblical heritage has always been influenced by other religions, either as Jews and Christians distinguished themselves from others around them, or as they incorporated surrounding language, symbols and concepts into their own faith expressions. The genre of biblical lament on which Middleton relies for his articulation of an "alternative theodicy" (1997: 20), as well as other strands in the Bible, arose out of either implicit or explicit dialogue with people of other faiths and cultures. Intentional interfaith dialogue can be a valuable component in the articulation of Christian theology today by rooting us in the experience of our religiously plural context even as biblical writers interacted with their own surroundings.

To conclude, let me emphasize what my response to Mr. Middleton's paper is *not*. This is not an interfaith dialogue. It is only a call for one. Interfaith dialogue demands knowledge of specific traditions and intense contacts with people of other religions. I have not even attempted to embark on such a project in this response. In addition, this response does not seek to draw the conclusion that interfaith dialogue necessarily leads to a different Christian understanding of God. It simply raises that possibility. Perhaps though, even the possibility of a God who is not unlimited in the Western rationalistic sense of good and power destroys the rational coherency of the "greater good" defense and renders it ineffective for Christians dealing with the problem of evil in relation to God. Finally, I am not suggesting that interfaith dialogue and a possible nuanced understanding of God denies Middleton's assertions about the nature and role of biblical lament. There are a variety of strands in the Bible, many of which presuppose different emphases of God or different understandings of God altogether. Christian tradition holds them in tension or at least allows them to exist alongside each other. Thus, the Psalms with their sovereign creator and Second Isaiah or Philippians with the suffering servant image of vulnerability can both be embraced faithfully as part of a single tradition.

What this response does attempt is to call for the use of all the spiritual resources available to us in the creation of Christian theology. It affirms Middleton's insistence on the starting point of experience in responding to evil and suffering. It also challenges the presupposition of an "good and

providentially sovereign" nature of God that Middelton seems to share with classical theodicies. Therefore, in the spirit of biblical theodicy that allows the problem of evil to remain a mystery while relying on the reality of relationship with God, I offer this appeal for interfaith dialogue with the belief that it may expand our understanding of God and even change our faith.

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Theodicy Between Philosophy and the Bible
Response to J. Richard Middleton

CLIFFORD BLAKE ANDERSON

What is the proper standpoint for thinking about theodicy? Is theodicy properly categorized as a philosophical, theological or biblical problem? Must there be an exclusive disjunction? If not, what differences obtain between these approaches? J. Richard Middleton's "Why the 'Greater Good' Isn't a Defense: Classical Theodicy in Light of the Biblical Genre of Lament" gives rise to these provocative questions. Middleton contrasts what he terms "classical theodicies" with "a biblical approach to theodicy" (p. 99). In his view, the biblical "texts and classical theodicies seem to inhabit different conceptual worlds altogether"(p. 99). Whereas classical theodicies justify the presence of evil in the divine order by recourse to rational argumentation, biblical theodicy laments, protests and seeks to eradicate evil. Middleton does not consider both approaches to be equally tenable. In his view, classical theodicies set up a rationally insoluble dilemma: either one must let go of classical theism or one must minimize the empirical reality of evil. For Middleton, this either/or is intractable. He recommends that we leave behind the rational consideration of theodicy in order to concentrate our attention on the treatments of theodicy by the biblical authors, who held together God's omnipotence and the empirical reality of evil in the practice of lament.

In pondering his argument, I am particularly captivated by his assertion that the biblical "texts and classical theodicies seem to inhabit different conceptual worlds altogether" (p. 99). I agree with Middleton in many respects, but I want also to query and to draw out the implications of this assertion. What is the conceptual world in which "classical theodicy" dwells? What are the key differences between that conceptual world and

the biblical world with reference to the theodicy debate? How great is the chasm between those worlds? Is rationality a predicate of one conceptual world, but not of the other? And, finally, what are the consequences of shifting the focus of the theodicy debate from the conceptual world that 'classical theodicy' inhabits to the biblical world? By pressing these questions, I seek to clarify the nature and consequences of Middleton's proposal that we shift from 'classical theodicy' to 'the biblical genre of lament.'

Let us begin by probing the salient differences between the conceptual world of 'classical theodicy' and the biblical world. Middleton points out various ways in which the conceptual world in which 'classical theodicy' dwells differs from the conceptual world of the Bible. He notes, for example, that the former is more concerned with apologetic arguments, the latter with existential concerns (p.101). Biblical theodicy also gives greater weight to evil than do classical theodicies, which tend to downplay evil's existence (p. 101).

One important difference to which Middleton does not call attention is the public character of the conceptual world in which the problem of theodicy traditionally has been discussed. By the term 'public' here, I mean that the language used to formulate the problem of theodicy is not particularly bound up with the Christian tradition. The question, "How do we square the omnipotence and goodness of God with the existence of evil?" is not especially Christian either in form or in content. In general, one need know very little about the Christian tradition to discuss theodicy. To understand the theodicy debate, it is far more crucial to have attained a basic philosophical education than to have been catechized by the Church. However, this should not greatly surprise us. It is important to remember with Middleton that what he terms the dilemma of 'classical theodicy' first emerged as an explicitly-formulated problem within the Greek and Roman philosophical tradition, and not within the biblical tradition (p. 81).

What is of some surprise is that Christian theorists have not accorded greater significance to classical theodicy's conceptual origins. It is something of a curious fact that a philosophical problem which arose within the Greek and Roman tradition could be taken up more-or-less directly by Christian theorists, without any significant alteration in its terms or formulation. What does it mean to say that Plato and Leibniz, Epicurus and Augustine were all struggling with the *same* problem of theodicy? Did Plato and Leibniz share the same conception of God's omnipotence? Did

Epicurus and Augustine entertain parallel views of God's benevolence? Obviously, some later thinkers on theodicy recognized that fundamental differences lay hidden beneath these deceptively similar formulations of the theodicy problem. But few have considered these differences fundamental enough to require Christians to break off from the discussion.

This suggests that both the Christians and the non-Christians involved in the classical theodicy debate were struggling to answer what is at root a *philosophical* problem about God, which may or may not intersect with the more properly *biblical* question whether the particular God who revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a just and faithful God. That is to say, the classical discussions about theodicy have been carried on at a fairly high level of abstraction from the biblical texts and from the Christian tradition in general. While some Christians may have sought to ground their arguments about theodicy in biblical texts, the debate has remained fundamentally philosophical in form and in content. Indeed, this is what makes classical theodicies so interesting. That the problem is formulated primarily in philosophical terms permits atheists, deists, as well as theists of all stripes to debate more or less on equal footing. Again, it is the use of philosophical terminology and rules for argumentation that endows the classical dilemma with its public character. Christian theologians are admitted to this debate without privileges, and any claim on their part to special insight because of their participation in the Christian tradition will likely be greeted either with skepticism or with the assertion that they are changing the subject.

For Christian theologians however, it is essential to discern the relation between this public, philosophical dilemma and the biblical question about God's justice. What has this rather abstract philosophical problem to do with the God who became flesh in Jesus Christ? In other words, what does Athens have to do with Jerusalem? The question is open and real, and not mere rhetorical sloganeering. To many Christian theologians, it has seemed self-evident that classical theodicies were addressing, albeit in non-biblical terms, a problem concerning God's justice that we find in Holy Scripture. (It is interesting to note that at least one reader in the philosophy of religion groups together Job with the writings of Hume and contemporary philosophers of religion in its chapter on "The Mystery of Evil" [MacGregor and Robb 1962: 258–301]). Middleton seems also to share this assumption; his claim appears to be that existentially-inclined Jerusalem does a better job than her rationalist sister-city Athens at conceiving

of God's justice. But what is our warrant for making this identification? Is it not possible that the differences between these conceptual worlds may be greater than Middleton and others have thought? How can we be so sure that with their radically different conceptual languages philosophers and the biblical authors are talking about the same "problem of evil"?

I argue that we cannot make this judgment unless we establish a working translation between the conceptual languages of the Bible and of philosophy. That is to say, we cannot decide whether the same problem is under discussion until we demonstrate that philosophers and the biblical writers are not talking past one another with their definitions of evil, goodness, God, etc. Middleton senses that there is a looseness in the definitions of certain key terms that span the conceptual languages. Take, for example, his comparison of the "omnipotence" of "classical theism" with the power of the biblical God. He writes, "The genre of lament is predicated on the expectation that God can and will rescue the supplicant. While this does not exactly amount to the philosophical doctrine of omnipotence as propounded by classical theism and as utilized in the greater good defense, it does imply sufficient power on God's part to eliminate evil" (p. 100). Middleton's circumspection indicates his sensitivity to the fact that a too-easy identification of "sufficient power on God's part" with "the philosophical doctrine of omnipotence" may cover over crucial differences between conceptual worlds. But this circumspection needs to become an explicit question. Should theologians make this rough identification? Is it permissible not to require alterations in the philosophers' definition of omnipotence? Must we demand that some alterations be made? Are we free to permit others to be overlooked? How many rough equivalences can we concede to before we distort the conceptual world of the Bible? To answer these and related questions requires us to engage in the hard work of translation, especially since our contemporary grasp of biblical terms is so colored by the definitions of their homophonic equivalents in philosophy. But if we do not take on this difficult task, we will be unable to determine with any precision whether classical theodicies are really addressing the same cluster of issues with which the biblical authors were wrestling.

Translation is a primary task of theology in the (post)modern world. In my view, theologians have to relate biblical concepts to prevailing philosophical notions (as well as physical, sociological and psychological ones) and vice versa. Responsible theologians will do this by developing working translation schemes that preserve as far as possible the character of the

conceptual worlds from which the languages originate. These translation schemes may often be quite rough and a good deal of inexactitude may have to be admitted. Generally speaking, it will not be possible to map propositions from different conceptual languages in a one-to-one correspondence. Yet to have rough working translation schemes between conceptual languages not only creates new possibilities for conceptualizing biblical notions, but also makes biblical concepts intelligible to the contemporary world. By claiming translation to be a key task of theology, I recognize that my conception of theology approximates to some extent what was called *Vermittlungstheologie* in the 19th century. That is to say, one important goal of theology is to mediate between the conceptual world of the Bible and other contemporary conceptual worlds.

But perhaps there is a way around this arduous task of translation. Is not another route open to theologians besides this mediation of conceptual worlds? Why not leave the philosophical terms to one side, and enter directly into the world of the Bible? Can we not adopt the biblical categories of lament, protest, etc. and leave off with rational analysis altogether? This is what I take Middleton to be suggesting when he argues that we should move away from the philosophical debate, which he considers to be "logically intractable," in order to seek a more biblical understanding of theodicy (p. 105). Here I give three reasons why I would caution us against making this move.

First, theologians should not let philosophers define what it means to be rational. As Christoph Schwöbel and others have demonstrated, theologians were concerned with the rationality of their truth-claims long before philosophers called their rationality into question. Schwöbel writes that "the problematical relationship between rationality and theology in modern times conceals the fact that theology and rationality are, in fact, intricately related through a long common history in the West, compared to which the view of the problematical nature of their relationship appears as a recent and, at least so far, comparatively brief episode" (Schwöbel 1992: 132). This history of mutual interchange should encourage theologians to resist attempts by contemporary philosophers to dictate terms for rational discussions of theological problems. We may listen respectfully to philosophers' concerns, but we need not always heed them. Although theologians must be aware of the limits of what will be construed as rational in the conceptual world of philosophy, knowledge of these limits should not prevent them from carrying on their task of translation. Some-

times the alterations in the terms of a discussion that theologians find it necessary to make may cause their formulation of a problem to lose the approval of philosophers. Yet theologians need not lose confidence in the rationality of the language that they speak simply because philosophers neither recognize nor acknowledge its rationality (cf. Barth 1975: 8).

Second, if theologians think a problem is rationally insoluble as philosophers are conceiving it, perhaps that might be a good time to make known the rational resources that theologians have in the biblical texts and in the theological tradition. Do theologians not owe it to philosophers to clarify and recast their debates, especially when they touch on matters divine? (I am thinking here of Paul's debate with the philosophers in Athens.) If we sense that philosophers are valuing "rational consistency" (p. 106) over empirical complexity, should we not object to their handling of the problem? Ought we not press them to become more thoroughly rational? Can we not make constructive objections, which seek to enhance their ability to think about God and evil? Perhaps by clarifying terms or by introducing new complexity, theologians might demonstrate that philosophers have really been addressing a "pseudo-problem."

Third, theologians cannot let go of rationality and still understand the Bible. For the conceptual world of the Bible does not lack logic, even if its logic is somewhat more complicated than, let us say, the standard first-order logic that we learn in philosophy courses. Reading the Bible is not like reading a Franz Kafka novel, in which rationality and logic do seem to be abrogated. I would say that the conceptual world that we discover in the Scriptures has its own instantiation of rationality, which intersects and diverges from philosophical rationality in interesting ways. More to the point, I think that the biblical genre of lament itself conforms to certain rational standards, which determine, for example, when lament is legitimate and when not. It is quite possible to study biblical laments and to describe their logic. Indeed, Middleton makes a good start in his paper toward describing the general patterns, rules and expectations that undergird the biblical practice of lament.

To be fair to Middleton, I think that he does not want to argue that the Bible is a-rational in general. As I read him, he wants to let go of rationality at one point only: the theodicy problem. But I would say that he is not bidding reason goodbye even at this point; he is simply taking up a study of biblical rationality. Perhaps I am merely quibbling with Middleton's words, but it seems an important quibble to make. For to claim that the

biblical world is at any point irrational or a-rational leaves a door open to all manner of faith-hucksters, who prey on the wounded, suffering and confused.

In conclusion, I want to note one final consequence of making this move from the philosophical debate about theodicy to the biblical practice of lamentation. Unlike philosophy, the conceptual world of the Bible is private, not public. More concretely put, the purpose and practice of biblical lament cannot be grasped by non-Christians (or, I would add, non-Jews). To lament properly, participation in the conceptual world of the Bible is essential. There are two reasons why this is so. First, the practice of biblical lament has meaning only against the network of propositions that we find in the biblical narrative. That is to say, the biblical practice of lament has significance only in the context of the covenant between God and God's chosen people. In general, when a psalmist laments, that psalmist is lamenting God's failure to fulfill God's covenant promises. Knowledge of these covenant promises is what gives psalmists some 'purchase' over and against God. This is, in part, what distinguishes, for example, the laments of Jeremiah from the instinctive cries and lamentations that a drowning person makes out of panic to "god." Jeremiah knows the character and the promises of God; the drowning person knows only an idol of his or her desperate imagination. Second, to lament properly requires membership in a community that nurtures and supports the practice of lament. Biblical lamentation is not a natural gift; it is an acquired skill which must be developed in community with God and God's people. One must *learn* in biblically-formed communities *how* to lament in order to become capable of lamenting in the full biblical sense.

Without knowledge of the covenant promises, spiritual practices and rationality of the biblical world, it is impossible to adopt the practice of lament that Middleton is recommending. In other words, a trade-off we make when moving from the philosophical consideration of theodicy to the biblical practice of lament is the loss of our ability to provide a solution to the problem of theodicy that all human beings will readily be able to understand and to apply in their lives. The conceptual world of the Bible is not private *de jure*, but it is private *de facto*. To enter into the conceptual world of the Bible requires study, prayer, reflection and personal commitment. One has to enter into covenant with God and God's chosen people before one may lament that God has not fulfilled the promises of that covenant. The conceptual world of the Bible is therefore less than fully

public; not everyone has encountered its "strange new world" (cf. Barth 1978).

As long as there are people who live without any rationally-viable explanation for evil, and who also lack the background knowledge and practices required to adopt the biblical practice of lament, the *philosophical* problem of theodicy will remain alive and pressing. Christians (and also Jews) who take up Middleton's suggestion to lament over evil may still want to consider, out of a sense of charity, the intellectual plight of non-Christians (and non-Jews), who are also seeking an explanation for the presence of evil in the world, but do not know how to lament properly. This implies that 'classical theodicies' must remain of interest to Christian theologians, even if they themselves no longer look at the problem of theodicy through the conceptual lenses of philosophy.

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The Danger of Confusing Pastoral and Theological Questions

Response to J. Richard Middleton

ELISABETH MARGARETE ZIEMER

In his paper "Why the 'Greater Good' Isn't a Defense: Classical Theodicy in Light of the Biblical Genre of Lament," Middleton set forth both a negative and a positive claim. The negative claim entails Middleton's most central and severe criticism of the *Greater Good Defense*, which is said to employ a strategy that attempts to counterbalance or even overbalance evil (p. 83) by various means: turning evil into something "good for us," denying *genuine* evil, or even advocating *prima facie* evil (p. 87). In addition, Middleton made a positive claim:

> Beyond the negative claim, then, that the Greater Good Defense is untenable as a solution to the problem of evil, this paper proposes that the Scriptures contain the resources and provide a paradigm for our *existential* struggle with evil. In particular, the genre of lament articulates what may be termed an alternative *theodicy*, which *allows for the processing* of the *disorientation* that arises from *lived experience of evil* (p. 105—italics mine).

Led by his passion for the genre of lament and its significant pastoral contributions, Middleton called for the annihilation of the strand of classical theodicy that employs the *Greater Good Defense*. Furthermore he suggested that it be replaced by a "biblical theodicy." This new and "alternative" type of theodicy is based on the genre of lament and is favored over and above the *Greater Good Defense* in classical theodicy.

Middleton's proposed "lament theodicy" clearly takes a strong and passionate pastoral stance since it "*allows for the processing* of the *disorientation* that arises from *lived experience of evil*" (p. 105—italics mine). From the pastoral point of view, this necessary interest must be highly valued, as theologians must be reminded continually of the pastoral implications of theology. Middleton made his case for a proposed functional solution extremely well, wherein lies the beauty of his paper—and its weakness as well. My hypothesis is that while addressing an urgent *functional* question regarding life in general and pastoral practice in particular, Middleton's proposed "lament" paradigm cannot offer an "alternative *theodicy*" since his paradigm deals with *human processing* of suffering, crisis, and—in his words—"lived experience of evil." Even more, Middleton made such a compelling pastoral case for lament as a *functional* solution in situations of suffering, crisis, and "lived experience of evil" that he ended up undermining his very own original theological argument.

I base my hypothesis on two observations: (A) Middleton's postulated "lament theodicy" is embedded in a *presupposed I-Thou-relationality* between God and the suffering person. Also, "lament theodicy" is based on the notion that lament, when given time, patience, and faith on the part of the suffering individual, begins a *progressive move* which, for Middleton, clearly leads into a situation "when all is well." (B) Middleton made a crucial error in his paper which might easily go unnoticed. While answering the question *how* we process experienced reality, his proposed "lament" paradigm fails to answer the question *why* there is evil in the first place. In other words, Middleton attempts to find a *functional* answer to an *existential* question, an effort which will never succeed.

Let me explain both of these elements in more detail (A). First, Middleton's functional pastoral solution of one's lamenting in the midst of suffering, crisis, and experienced evil entails a *progressive move*. This progression starts when one addresses God and moves from "lament not only to thanksgiving and praise (that is to celebration and anticipation of God's coming shalom), but also to discipleship and ethical action—to practical engagement with the world animated by a vision of that shalom" (p. 101). Even though Middleton acknowledged that his proposed theodicy "represents an intensification of the problem, in that it allows for (even calls for) questioning of God's justice" (p. 105), this dilemma is counterbalanced by both the progression and the hope intrinsic to lament. When pointing out this coupling of progression and hope, Middleton suggested a

strategy similar to those previously proposed in the area of pastoral care and/or psychology of religion. Several stage models, developed subsequent to extensive empirical studies, have been designed for the management of severe suffering. One group of these models suggests a reframing from suffering as experienced evil into suffering as a *lifelong learning process* that offers *interpretations of meaning* to suffering.[1] However, these models also demonstrate that,

> the existential questions of *Whence* and *Why* of suffering must remain *unanswered,* since suffering does not allow for any causality or logical mastery. Yet, it became obvious: the questions of *What for, [To what end]* and *Where to*, when embedded in a relationality between those affected by suffering and God, can open *interpretations of meaning.* This occurs most frequently when [suffering is] experienced in the context of community, and subsequent to one's agreeing to a lifelong process of learning (Schuchard 1994:157—translation mine).

Second, Middleton based his argument for a "lament theodicy" on a presupposed *I-Thou-relationality* between God and the suffering individual which must be established by God. This *I-Thou-relationality* points toward another group of models, based on Erikson's life-cycle-theory that propose a constructive use of crises (Cf. Erikson 1959). Erikson developed an epigenetic model of human development which suggests that every individual, confronted with other persons and environments, undergoes developmental crises. When these crises are successfully managed, relationships initiated by others and by the surrounding environment allow one to establish one's sense of identity in the course of a *life-long process*

[1] The lamenting stages mentioned by Middleton parallel Oates' discussion (1955:51–57) of the anxiety of grief, and Kübler-Ross's discussion (1969:34–138) of the stages of dying, where shock, denial, anger, depression, bargaining, acceptance, and hope are named as stages of grief and loss. The lamenting stages also correspond with stages of crisis management which are embedded in the learning process based on crisis management described by Schuchard, where uncertainty, certainty, aggression, bargaining, depression, acceptance, activity, and solidarity make up a progressive spiral of learning stages in the ongoing process of crisis management. (1981:21–35, esp. 33; in English, 1989:24–42, esp. 39)

of psycho-social identity formation. A healthy sense of identity, then, results in human virtues (Cf. Erikson 1964). Hope, the first of the eight proposed virtues, is shaped when an infant manages successfully the first crucial crisis of basic trust versus basic mistrust toward the mother. However, if this crisis is not managed successfully, further development will be hindered, since this crisis is essential for the possibility of any further development and relating to others. The last of the eight virtues is wisdom that results from mastering the final crisis between despair and integrity.[2] Since Middleton's "lament theodicy" includes a *progressive* development of *human virtues* stemming from a *life-long process of both crisis management and psycho-social identity formation*, I suggest that Middleton's pastoral paradigm of lament is closely related to both types of stage models that discuss human and spiritual development; he even may have combined these models. However, these stage models, as well as Middelton's pastoral paradigm of lament, do *not* address the problem of *theodicy*.

(B) When rooting his argument in the notion of a *progressive move* and a presupposed *I-Thou-relationality* as inherent to the dynamics of lament, Middleton ends with characteristics similar to those he has criticized in the *Greater Good Defense*: suffering, crisis, and evil may be seen as something that ultimately leads to a greater good. Thereby, while offering a passionate *pastoral* solution, Middleton destroys his very own *theological* argument. In other words, due to his very notion of a *progressive move* and unquestionable *I-Thou-relationality*, Middleton's work can be evaluated similarly to his harsh judgment of the *Greater Good Defense*, which

[2] The progression in the lamenting stages shows clear similarities with Erikson's life cycle stages. Also, Erikson applied his epigenetic stage model to the realm of ritualization when he suggested a stage-sequence of numinous, judicious, dramatic, formal, ideological, affiliative, generational, and integral ritual elements (Cf. 1977). Other authors have applied Erikson's stage model in various ways. For example, Capps (1979:108–16, esp. 114) correlated the theological themes of Providence, Grace or Gratefulness, Repentance, Vocation, Faith, Communion, Vocation, and Awareness of the Holy with the psychosocial crises and the human virtues they may facilitate. Aden (1976) proposed faith dimensions and spiritual dimensions in accordance with the life cycle stages when listing the following progressive dimensions of faith: faith as trust, courage, obedience, assent, identity, self-surrender, unconditional caring, and unconditional acceptance. These are but a few examples of models based on Erikson's life cycle theory; however, all of these models are in accordance with the lamenting stages set forth by Middleton.

he explicitly had intended to overcome: "Whereas the *motivation* is admirable... it is the *strategy* that is problematic" (p. 86).

In short, it appears that the *functional pastoral* solution of human processing of suffering and evil locked Middleton into the same problematic strategy that trapped many of his predecessors. That is, Middleton's proposal is a functional solution which, while beautifully addressing functional pastoral needs, fails to meet Middleton's very own theological criteria in pondering theodicy. This failure occurs because lamenting, when based on a *progressive* move toward a positive outcome, permits evil to turn into something rather positive. However, the *existential theological* question of whether God might indeed be malevolent remains a rhetorical one, for lamenting presupposes an *I-Thou-relationality* that is initiated and maintained by God rather than by our addressing God and our lamenting. The *I-Thou-relationality* is primarily based on God's loving relationship toward and with us rather than on our loving or thanking and praising God. Due to the *collapsing of the functional level with the existential level,* Middleton's paper tragically fails to achieve the goal that the author has set out to master: to establish a new paradigm of "biblical theodicy" based on lament.

In spite of this criticism, I found indicators in this essay that point toward *possible alternative models* that allow for lamenting as suggested by Middleton (i.e., for being pastorally functional as well as theologically adequate):

Though prematurely rejected by Middleton, one option lies in *process thought.* A re-definition of process as offered in process thought would allow for both confidence in, and hopefulness for, the future without relying completely on the *I-Thou-relationality* between God and human beings. Process thought acknowledges that the past has influenced the present, which in turn influences the future; however, process does not necessarily entail a *progressive move.* Furthermore, the claim that genuine novelty is possible while relative continuity is maintained finds strong support.

The concept of *paradox*, another option already mentioned by Middleton, could also be strengthened. For example, the paradoxical "theology of the cross" could be reinforced in order to show that God, though not preventing us from experiencing all suffering, joins us in all suffering. Eschatological hope, also suggested by Middleton, pushes the paradox even further. True *eschatological theology* is based on the paradox of

Christ's resurrection: in his sacrificial death on the cross, Christ achieved eternal life. As Christians, we too anticipate this paradoxical journey in the future. Yet, as repeatedly argued by both Metz and Moltmann, this future event must proleptically free us in our present lives, so that, on the basis of this "reverse" paradox, we can face suffering and evil while actively engaging in social changes.

Last but not least, the model of *transformation*, though omitted by Middleton, could be explored. In transformation, a transforming agent utterly changes the nature and quality of participanting parts at once; the outcome of any given transformation depends on the nature and quality not of the participating parts but rather of the transforming agent. If Christ and/or the Holy Spirit is the transforming agent in a situation of suffering, crisis, and experienced evil, and if crucial change may occur that does not result from progress but from a sudden transformation, then the problems of crisis management and theodicy might be solved. Thus, the transformation model can be considered theologically as well as logically adequate while being supported not only by Scripture and Christian experience, but also by the "hard sciences."[3]

I believe that tremendous potential lies in the options of *process thought*, *paradox*, or *transformation.* Furthermore, additional solutions might be found which address not only the functional question of the management of suffering, crisis, and experienced evil, but also the existential question of theodicy.

[3] Representative examples can be found in philosophy (Levi-Strauss, in: Loder 1989:159, n. 1, and in Loder 1980:191), in neurotheology (Ashbrook 1984, 1988, 1989, and 1993; Ashbrook and Rausch Albright 1997), and in transformational theology (Loder 1989; Loder and Neidhardt 1992).

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Why "Lament" is not a Defense at All
Response to J. Richard Middleton

TOMÁŠ HANČIL

It is highly appropriate to speak about themes that belong to systematic theology or even to philosophical theology from the point of view of biblical scholarship. Systematic theology and its formulations stand under the critique of the Scripture, and to do justice to an issue such as theodicy we need to hear the biblical message clearly. However, the main task of systematic theology is to take the rich and sometimes ambiguous message of scripture and suggest a system that in a coherent manner speaks of God, human beings, nature, and the relationship among them in a reasonable and credible manner. It is an attempt to formulate a view that can incorporate all aspects of our experience. It is also an attempt to formulate a rational system of theology which is in fact the very basis of the possibility of speaking theologically. Rationality is what connects the different contributions in discussions such as ours to one another. To openly dispense with rationality, as J. Richard Middleton does (p. 107), not only disqualifies his own position, but also denies the right of any respondent to challenge such a position.

Therefore, even if I tend to agree with Middleton's criticism of the "greater good" theodicy, I cannot agree with his methodology, and I do not see his proposed "lament" type of theodicy as a viable alternative. I do not want to defend the positions he argues against. But I am convinced that if a strong case against "greater good" theodicy (which I suspect in Middleton's terminology means classical theodicy in general) can be made, it must be more carefully argued than has been done. And again, such argumentation must be rational.

I understand that in order to make a positive creative argument, the issue argued must be simplified in order to allow time and space for the argument itself. It seems to me however, that the simplification we have

seen in Middleton's paper is such that it prevents fruitful dialogue with the systematic and philosophical issues involved. Therefore, I would first like to clarify the issue Middleton has raised and only then comment on his own proposal.

I will start with objections to the portrayal of Augustinian theodicy in Middleton's paper and perhaps defend philosophical theodicy against Middleton's attack. Augustine's thinking indeed plays an irreplaceable role in the theological understanding of evil. It is not however, because of his insistence on balancing evil with good, but rather his redefinition of evil as a lack of good (*privacio boni*)[1] into Christian theology. The roots of this idea are Plotinian, but the specific Christian use of them against dualistic Manicheism is Augustine's. Since Augustine, many Christian thinkers have thought of evil as a positive expression of a negative quality—the lack of good. Absolute evil is then understood as nothingness from Augustine to Barth (Barth 1960:§50).

From this point of view, creation out of nothing is an absolutely positive move in the sense that whatever level of being is achieved, it is always more good than no creation at all. The picture of a scale which would balance good and evil is a false image, since it presupposes a neutral level which is disturbed by good or evil and requires us to understand evil positively. The Augustinian model, however, does not see any neutral ground and altogether refuses to talk in such dualistic terms. Only good has being; evil is participation on the lack of it. Middleton however portrays classical theodicies as comparing good and evil within creation. The good and evil are then measured against each other and every evil has to be justified by some kind of good for its being. This might be a particular distortion of Augustine's theodicy, due to Hick's atomistic interpretation. However, Augustine's theodicy is clearly antidualistic. The holistic approach to theodicy does not compare good and evil within the world, but looks at the big picture. God's creation is in principle good, compared with the possibility of no creation at all.

[1] *Enchiridion* iii, II *Confessions* vii, 12 *City of God* xi. 9 and 22 are a few of many places Augustine states this. Hick regards the idea of the privation of good as a basis of Augustine's theodicy (*Evil and the God of Love,* part II, chapter III), and talks about the "plenitude" and "aesthetic"—which is closer to greater good defense—later in chapter IV.

The greater good argument made from a holistic perspective (such as Augustine's or Barth's) is thus not comparative, but takes creation as a system that is contingent upon God's will, and which as such is a positive good in the absolute sense. It is a philosophical argument that suggests that there are metaphysical principles involved that tie together good and evil. It is not a practical argument that would compare the sum of good and subtract the sum of evil to find out whether the result is positive or negative. Rather it is a positive understanding of creation as the good creation of God. Admittedly, it is not capable of answering existential questions about evil experienced in our lives. Such questions are approached by a "free will" theodicy, which does not get an adequate treatment in Middleton's paper.

To anchor his own proposal, Middleton presents the "greater good" theodicy as a basic type of classical theodicy. Middleton collapses all the different classical theodicies into the one "greater good" theodicy, only in order to reject the credibility of such theodicies in general. This generalization might be useful for the sake of his argument, but misses many important differences in these theodicies. I shall focus on free will theodicy as an distinct type of theodicy which cannot be subsumed under the "greater good" theodicy. I am convinced that subsuming the "free will" theodicy under the "greater good" theodicy is a serious mistake and I want to speak about the distinction between them not only in order to clarify Middleton's critique of classical theodicies, but because I suspect that the same misconception distorts his own construction of an alternative "lament" theodicy.

"Free will" theodicy introduces a concept of free agents, who are capable acting independently of their creator. It is important to understand this freedom as a genuine possibility to act one way or another. This genuine freedom includes the possibility of eating or not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We all know very well that it is possible to decide against God's will. The decision to lead our lives without regard for and relationship to God is described as sin in the Bible and is an important part of Christian theology. Genuine freedom, however, does not necessitate evil, as Middleton wrongly assumes (under the influence of Plantinga). He is convinced that free will logically implies evil, stating that: "Free will is logically impossible without evil" (p. 85). It is necessary to be more precise here. Free will implies only the *possibility* of evil and not the reality of an actual evil. Free will *by definition* is not a logical implica-

tion of anything. It is free. God's creation of agents with free will does not in any sense necessitate the occurrence of evil. Free agents are free to do good or evil deeds—no necessity either way is involved. We must not mix together the theological doctrine of the fall and original sin with logical consequences of freedom. Even though we may say that there is evil on the basis of both experience and theological doctrines, it is not possible to conclude that evil is necessitated by freedom. We could imagine God taking away our freedom and guiding all the processes of the universe in such a way that there is no evil. Granting the possibility of such situation, there is still no reason to posit a necessary causal connection between freedom and evil. It is a logical mistake to do so.

The argument of "free will" theodicy is thus not parallel to "greater good" theodicy, because it does not suggest that the goodness of freedom is more valuable than all the evil freedom brings. Such an argument would be impossible, since there is no way to predict what evils freedom will bring, if any at all, and therefore it is impossible to judge their weight against the value of freedom. This essential openness to the future implied by the freedom of creation must be put in correlation with the fact that we live in a material world, where our decisions interact with causal processes. In other words, we have to understand that the essentially free dimension of our acts is connected with causal materiality of the world of which we are a part and that our decisions have consequences that we can hardly ever fully predict. Furthermore, the past profoundly influences all that we are and all that we do. Thus we are partly determined and partly free. This combination of freedom and determination is a basic condition of the historicity in which we live. It would be useful to explore the implications of this condition for our understanding of God's activity in the world. By taking part in the materiality of the world, Jesus in his incarnation took the historical condition upon himself—with all the limitations that come with being a historical person. Sometimes he was not able to do "mighty" works (Mk 6:5) and he was not quite sure about God's will at crucial moments. If we understand God in a Trinitarian framework, we have to take these limitations to God's activity in the world seriously. Let us now come back to the problem of theodicy from this perspective.

Given the reasons above, the collapse of the "free will" theodicy into "greater good" theodicy, which might be seen as a minor detail in the first part of Middleton's paper, points to a much more important issue, one that plays a major role in the whole paper. To collapse "free will" theodicy into

"greater good" theodicy presupposes and is possible only through the denial of genuine freedom and ultimately only by the adoption of a deterministic world view. Then, I must admit, theodicy really is a tough issue. If God is the only and sole power and is responsible for everything that is, only the unbelievable "greater good" theodicy is available. Middleton is absolutely correct about the ethical and practical implications of such a theory. Sadly however, I am afraid that he is carrying the deterministic basis of this approach over into his own constructive proposal, which should be an alternative one.

Middleton defends the notion of God's omnipotence as rooted in the biblical material against process theology, and in doing so joins the classical theodicies in an attempt to make plausible the existence of an ultimately good, omnipotent, and omniscient God governing a world where genuine evil is experienced. For Middleton, both God's righteousness and goodness are immediately affirmed in the fact that we call on God to be righteous and to correct the injustice from which we suffer. Middleton's new proposition is to refrain from unbelievable (though logically possible) attempts to explain away evil and react positively by confronting God with our experience. Such a move has very little to do with theodicy (in the sense of making God just) but it is rather an accusation of God. Also it is not a constructive proposal for approaching the question of evil in our world, but as has been already noted by Margarete Ziemer (pp. 135-42), a practical suggestion as to how to deal with evil once it has occured. However, I am afraid that there is even more serious internal incoherence that makes the "lament" theodicy unacceptable.

To lament some evil means to wish that it did not happen. It means to talk about what should have happened instead. Does such attitude fit Middleton's position at all? I do not think so. The combination of God's goodness and God's ability to prevent evil makes our lament about evil in the world look rather groundless. It is necessary to assume that God's goodness is such that every evil that can be avoided, God wills to be avoided. His ability to do so implies that God in fact avoids evils that can be avoided. Therefore if Middleton upholds both God's ability to prevent evil and God's goodness, he must regard all evil occurring in the world as necessary evil.

How then, I would ask, it is possible to lament to God about something we understand as necessary? If a particular evil was permitted by God, it must have been necessary, and thus we are wrong to lament in the sense

of asking that something that *had* to happen not happen. Therefore we should conclude that lament is an improper reaction to the presence of evil in our world.

Yet lament seems to be a good reaction to the presence of evil, a reaction that not only enables us to deal in a positive way with evil, but also a reaction that connects with our deepest beliefs in the goodness of God. It expresses hope for God's involvement in the world, however horrendous our circumstances. The alternative, to refrain from the expression of regret about evil—not to lament—is utterly unacceptable, since it would have consequences described by Middleton in his critique of classical theodicy.

I am afraid that Middleton's solution is simply not acceptable as a theological position, even thought it might have very profound pastoral dimensions and desirable ethical implications. If a "greater good" theodicy is not believable, a "lament" theodicy as proposed by Middleton is at least paradoxical, if not absurd. When we cry to God for a change, the implicit presupposition is that such change is possible. But we have determined that if God is omnipotent and good, all actually occurring evils are necessary. Thus if it is not possible to prevent the evil from occurring, our outcry is nothing more than a psychological tool to get beyond the undesirable consequences of evil. However, that is not "redemptive" in any Christian sense of the word.

Nor does it seem to have a positive function as motivating factor. Retaining the notion of God's omnipotence logically implies the same situation as the "greater good" defense. If evil is necessary (and we do not need to rationalize why) then opposing it is not only futile, but possibly unfaithful and godless behavior. The ethical paralysis described by Middleton as consequence of the "greater good" theodicy is based on the notion of an omnipotent God, who unilaterally controls the processes of our world. Weeping and crying has often been seen as an alternative to the active opposition to evil. It is certainly true from a psychological point of view that there is a positive function in expressing emotions, including anger. Yet lament alone is not a basis for an active opposition to evil. It can be an important factor, but it does not solve the crucial question of the origin of evil and God's possible relation to it. The big question for theodicy, "why there is evil in the world?" has been answered by replying to different question, namely "how do we cope with it?"

What is needed is "a global argument, the purpose of which is to show that a theistic interpretation can illuminate the totality of our experience,

including the experience of evil, better than nontheistic interpretations" (Griffin 1976:254). But this is exactly what "lament" theodicy, as Middleton formulates it, fails to do.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach. By Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995, xiv + 242 pages.

Pastoral counseling has been subject to criticism from its own peers, particularly other theologians, since psychology became predominant in modern anthropology. The development in western culture's perception of the human being has moved from a Christian anthropology that states that the human being is deeply embedded in and cannot get out of original sin, to a modern, psychological anthropology that says that the human being's freedom and condition is determined by others. This means that Christian anthropology clashes with modern anthropology. However, since Christianity is also subject to changes from society, pastoral counseling has since the 1950's gradually integrated psychology and its anthropology in pastoral counseling, primarily in North America. The criticism against this development in pastoral counseling has been expressed by theologians like Hulme and Harbaugh, while European theologians like Thurneysen and Pattison have criticized American pastoral counseling as a whole for overlooking the theological aspect of pastoral counseling. The problem is a genuine one, and centers around the issue of what the doctrines of the church and the confession of the church have to do with everyday problems. Should a minister make counselees realize their sinfulness before God, no matter what the conditions of their daily-life are? For example, when a counselee comes and says "I was sexually abused as a child," or, "My wife wants a divorce," should the minister point to the doctrine of sin and say: "whether you have been abused or not, or your wife wants to divorce or not, you have to realize that you are a sinner and ought to repent before God"? The problem here seems quite obvious. To begin with the doctrine of original sin is not really bringing comfort to the counselee. Therefore, pastoral counseling has been inclined to focus less upon the

doctrines and instead start listening to what people themselves say, and what people themselves are considering as solutions to their problems. In other words, out with the doctrines of theology, and in with psychology. Some pastoral theologians have pointed out the similarity in concepts between psychology and theology, since some strands of psychology take as their point of departure people's inability to extricate themselves from problems unles they realize the true nature of the problem (theologically equivalent with: "Admit you are a sinner, and you shall be saved.") The so-called difference between theology and psychology could therefore be seen as forced. Not all theologies are the same, and not all psychologies are the same. However, as doctrinally oriented theologians point out, there is a problem with the looseness of psychology's anthropology.

Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, in her book *Theology and Pastoral Counseling,* has tried to solve this problem of the relation between psychology and theology. The whole intention behind the book is to suggest to both the doctrinally oriented theologian and the religiously skeptical psychologist that both languages are necessary. Both theology and psychology express what we need to know as pastoral counselors. The strategy van Deusen Hunsinger uses is to take the Chalcedonian pattern, as Karl Barth defines it, as a framework within which both theology and psychology can prevail. The Chalcedon council stated in regard to the relationship between the two natures of Jesus Christ that Christ is completely human and completely divine; these two natures are 1) not to be confused, 2) not to be separated. Barth adds to the Chalcedonian doctrine that the divine nature of Christ is what attained victory over death. Barth's definition of the Chalcedon pattern is therefore threefold: the two natures are related, the two natures are different, and the divine nature prevails over the human nature. Van Deusen Hunsinger applies this to pastoral counseling so that the languages of psychology and of theology are to one another: 1) an indissoluble differentiation, 2) an inseparable unity, and 3) an indestructible order (p.65). "Indissoluble differentiation" means that they are related without confusion or change. "Inseparable unity" means that they correspond accurately without separation or division. "Indestructible order" means that in their differentiated unity, one term has logical precedence over the other (p. 65). In this regard, theology has logical precedence over psychology. This is probably also the right distinction to make if one wants to follow a Barthian theology of God the creator as prior to the creature. The three features are made explicit when van Deusen Hunsinger describes

the relation between healing and salvation. These features are interesting because healing is a psychological as well as theological term, while salvation is a theological term (p. 75). In defining the three features, we also come to see more clearly the relation between psychology and theology. Each discipline can be described without reference to the other (indissoluble differentiation). The two terms can have inseparable unity, since salvation as forgiveness and healing can be intertwined by God's grace (inseparable). The two terms must also be seen in their indestructible ordering, or asymmetrical relation. Healing and salvation operate on two different levels. While salvation has eternal significance, healing is local and temporal. Healing can point to salvation, but salvation cannot point to healing on the same local level (p. 74). Salvation is signifier to the eternal life that ultimately will take away the human being's condition of sin.

Van Deusen Hunsinger gives the example of a woman who has encountered sexual abuse as a child. Speaking from the standpoint of a non-religious psychologist, the woman would be defined as a victim, and innocent. Speaking from a Christian standpoint, the woman would be a sinner, however abused or not. To a pastoral theologian like Eduard Thurneysen (1888–1974), psychology does have appropriate tools for healing, but not for use by a minister when working as a pastoral counselor. To a minister, any psychological problem can only be viewed from the perspective of sin: "The pastor is concerned, however, not with neurosis but with a deeper disturbance, that of sin. Sin is understood to be the ground out of which neurosis emerges but as something quite distinct from neurosis" (p. 79). While van Deusen Hunsinger argues that Thurneysen follows the three features of the Chalcedonian pattern (p. 78), it seems that in saying 'sin is the ground out of which neurosis emerges,' then we are no longer talking about two different levels, as Barth describes it (p. 74), but rather about a confusion of the two languages. Neurosis is, after all, not something everybody has, while every human being is bound by sin.

Van Deusen Hunsinger herself makes that distinction when defining the difference between sinner and victim: everybody is a sinner, but not everybody is a victim of childhood abuse and deprivation (p. 71). From the perspective of the Chalcedonian pattern applied to the above mentioned case, the counselee is a sinner since the human in relation to God is hostile and broken (p. 72). Only secondarily does sin describe the relations between human beings: "It [sin] only secondarily pertains to relationships between human beings and then only as they are understood through the

primary God-relationship" (p. 72). To be a victim is, however, primarily something that takes place in relationships between human beings; this is the focus of system theory, particularly in the case of family systems. The family system can victimize its member and make a change in the system appear impossible. To become a victim is contingent, not necessary. It is accidental in so far as it need not be so, while sin is not accidental but essential (p. 71–72). Within the Chalcedonian pattern, the counsellee as victim thus does not exclude that the counselee is also a sinner. People commit sins against others, and are responsible for those sins (p. 71). To continue in the picture of the family system, what the members do to one another is not a matter of "victims that can't help victimizing others." The counselee is responsible for sinning against others in allowing the continuing pattern of victimization. In this way, van Deusen Hunsinger's use of the Chalcedonian pattern solves the problem mentioned in the beginning. The relation between theology and psychology is not a matter of an opposition, but about naming different things with their right names. Pastoral counseling is not about rejecting the victim as subject to the doctrine of sin, but neither is it about focusing only on sin, as Thurneysen does. Pastoral counseling can think both theologically and psychologically. It can both heal the wounded and point to salvation through healing and faith.

The book is, overall, a very thorough presentation of what different psychologists, like Dorothy Martin and Ana-Maria Rizzuto, and theologians, like Shirley Guthrie, Eduard Thurneysen, Thomas Oden, and Daniel Price make of each others' field. Van Deusen Hunsinger shows, with careful theological and psychological awareness, the different strengths and flaws in varying theories on humankind and its relation to God. The suggestion of seeing the Chalcedonian pattern as a resolution of the dichotomy between theology and psychology is most convincing, if one sees the dichotomy as van Deusen Hunsinger describes it. It is time that a pastoral theologian described the ways in which practical theology is not less theological than other fields within theological training, but actually is the place that theology should play its most important role. For anybody interested in the question of interdisciplinary work between theology and pastoral counseling, this book is highly recommended.

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Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion. By S. Mark Heim. Faiths Meet Faiths Series. New York: Orbis Books, 1995, x + 242 pages.

For its own survival, humanity seems to have realized the essentiality of living in harmony with itself and with other creatures. The felt need for a peaceful spirit of mutual co-existence between different human groups and between humans and other living beings has inspired some theologians to rethink various aspects of Christian teachings. Among the emerging new theologies is a current known as "pluralistic theology," which deals with Christianity's relationship with other religions under the rubric of "theology of religions." The most striking feature of this pluralistic theology of religions is the challenge it brings to traditional Christian attitudes toward other religions. In *Salvations*, S. Mark Heim, Professor of Theology at Andover Newton Theological Seminary, analyzes and critiques the works of three prominent western pluralistic theologians: John Hick, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and Paul Knitter. Heim defines pluralistic theologians as those who propose a "reconstruction of the fundamentals of Christian faith," even to the point of denying Christian uniqueness, and call for "a Copernican Revolution" (p. 2).

The book is divided into two parts: "Pluralism" and "Salvations." While the first part analyzes and critiques the theologies of the three pluralistic theologians, in the second part, Heim proposes and defends a thesis which he calls "orientational pluralism" (p. 143). The strength of the book lies in Heim's in-depth analytical study of the pluralistic theologies as he exposes their serious loopholes. Heim engages most intensely with John Hick, and he aligns himself closest to Paul Knitter's soteriological approach of a "liberation theology of religions" (p. 71).

The one common thread that binds the three pluralistic theologians together, according to Heim, is their insistence on a single salvific goal for all religions. Though they approach the question of religious plurality from different viewpoints, all three come to the conclusion that there is a unity of goal beyond the plurality of traditions. The different religious traditions are just different paths to the same end. To John Hick, who emphasizes the transcendental dimension of religions from a philosophical standpoint, "the divine Reality" is the common object of all world religions. As a historian of religions, Wilfred Cantwell Smith claims that there is only one history of religion, the common substance of which is faith. Like Hick's divine Reality, Smith perceives faith—which he distinguishes from be-

liefs—as the point at which the divergent religious traditions converge. Whereas both Hick and Smith approach the problem of religious plurality from a "theocentric" perspective, Paul Knitter, according to Heim, employs a "soteriocentric" approach. "Theocentrism assumed common ground in the religious object... Soteriocentrism seeks common ground in human need—the religious subjects" (p. 76). The soteriocentric approach seeks peaceful mutual coexistence between different religions. For Knitter, different religious groups can come to an understanding relationship through religious dialogue based on a common ground; and that common ground, he proposes, is the theme of justice.

In his critique, Heim points out that the "odd paradox" of pluralistic theology is its insistence on a common end of the different religions. "They insist that despite any apparent indication to the contrary, there is no diversity in the religious object (Hick), in the human religious attitude (Smith), or the primary religious function (Knitter)" (p. 102). For Heim, such an insistence fails to recognize the validity of each religious tradition's independent claims. In other words, pluralistic theology does not recognize the full or true plurality of religious traditions when it insists on a single goal for all religions. Furthermore, the pluralists mirror the exclusivists they vehemently condemn by affirming the exclusive validity of their theology. "Of the vast religious diversity of the world," Heim states, "the pluralists affirm as valid only that narrow segment where believers have approximated the authors' approach to their own traditions" (pp. 101–2). Thus, the pluralists are not pluralists enough (or not pluralists at all) in their failure to accept the plurality of religious ends. A truly pluralistic theology, for Heim, should respect the different traditions by recognizing the plurality of their different goals. Therefore he proposes an alternative pluralistic theology that attempts to take seriously the distinctness and validity of each religion's goal. As a Christian theologian, he delves into the Christian tradition "to point out that 'the finality of Christ' and the 'independent validity of other ways' are not mutually exclusive" (p. 3).

Using the classical inclusivists' position as the starting point, Heim's orientational pluralism proposes "a hypothesis of multiple religious ends" (p. 147). In defining his position from a Christian standpoint, Heim states, "Christians can consistently recognize that some traditions encompass religious ends which are real states of human transformation, distinct from that Christians seek" (p. 160). Can Christians recognize this persuasion

based on Christian tradition? Heim acknowledges this difficulty and says, "Plainly Christian sources, from scripture on, tend to stress a twofold distinction (the saved and the lost)" (p. 163). To make room for his theory, he proposes a third division that will accommodate "alternative religious fulfillments" (p. 163). In his attempt to defend the validity of the third way, Heim bases his argument on the Trinity by relating it to the philosophical concept of plenitude. To this reviewer, this part of the book is crucial, but relatively weak and in need of further development.

By pointing out the limits and deficiencies of pluralistic theology in its three notable forms, Heim successfully shows us the major deficits of pluralistic theology. His meticulous in-depth analysis lays bare the loopholes and arrogance of this emerging pluralistic theology of religion. Not only does he scrutinize the works of the three pluralistic theologians, he also demonstrates the seriousness of religious plurality for Christians. His attempt to construct a "new" pluralistic theology that respects and validates Christian tradition is a serious challenge for all Christian theologians.

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An Evangelical Theology of Preaching. By Donald English. Abingdon Press, 1996, 140 pages.

Sagacious preachers today often analyze the theology they preach within their sermons. But all too often most do not step back from their preaching to analyze the theology of the preaching event itself. New Testament scholar Donald English attempts such a feat from an evangelical perspective with this recent title. English served for many years as the chief executive for Home Missions in The Methodist Church of Britain and is now chair of the World Methodist Council. His book, which was the result of his Beeson Lectureship on Preaching at Asbury Theological Seminary, is not another "method" book on homiletics, but instead asks why we communicate the gospel and what such communication should contain.

Yet, English may surprise readers with this work. The author not only emphasizes preaching normed by the gospel, but also gives consideration of the context of the hearers in order for effective preaching to take place. With "presenting of the whole of life to God" as his working definition of

worship, English admonishes preachers to meet congregations where they are in order for their communication to "help people to discern and celebrate the presence of God in the whole of life." (p.113) For English, this means that preachers need to become not only capable expositors of scripture, but also observers and interpreters of current events in the news and in the life of the congregation. Only by bridging these two seemingly distant worlds can preachers proclaim a transcendent God working in the midst of contemporary life.

Throughout the book, the author posits what seem to be theological polarities in order to be inclusive of both God's plan and the diverse personalities of the congregation. His first chapter portrays God as being immanent in the midst of humanity, though differing from us in God's transcendence. English joins Creation and Redemption as two parts of the one saving activity of God. Therefore, he views Christ as the basis for all liberation, yet acknowledges the existence of Kingdom signs outside of the church. Such a paradoxical theology leads English to believe that preachers are mandated to "begin where people are with our biblical preaching, and speak about what they know in language that they understand" (p.30).

English bemoans the fate of catechized doctrine as becoming "petrified" or trapped in a static form. He emphasizes the need for Christian doctrine to come to life in the sermon by clearly relating it to the life circumstances of the hearers. Yet the center of the content and authority of preaching remains, for English, in the Bible. He notes: "The more the preacher explores doctrinal content in the face of the opportunities and challenges of modern life, the deeper and more profound that doctrinal content will be seen to be, and the more relevant and exciting the preaching task becomes" (p. 38). Thus, according to English, Christian doctrine must continue to play a key role in homiletics, but not as a "series of trophies in cabinets." Instead, he urges the preacher to observe, praise, and relate doctrine both as basic truths of Christian faith and as a lens through which to examine human existence.

While unabashedly evangelical and at times overly simplistic, the theology presented in the book is cautious in avoiding individualistic perspectives only. The author points out that only by opening theology to corporate ideas does true relevancy and understanding in society take place. As such, preachers are to address both individual and corporate sin, suffering, repentance, and conversion themes in their sermons, so as to be mindful of all the realities of life. At the same time, English calls for a theology

in preaching which is balanced between reason and faith, theological weight and invitation to participation. This reasonable faith requires preachers to teach theology, make sense of current events, and preach hope for the future. He argues that biblical doctrine requires preachers to proclaim theology publicly in order to bring about change in society, culture, and the world. Only by proclaiming theology in its greatest depth, only by portraying its singularity from the rest of society, might it offer any contribution to the public square.

A particularly insightful chapter deals with the juxtaposition of preaching the gospel with a consistent Christology but divergent homiletical approaches depending upon the context and the receiving audience. With numerous biblical examples, English skillfully demonstrates the varied natures and cultures in the New Testament which required ancient preachers to begin where people were by addressing issues that they could comprehend, while offering enough to be the basis of saving faith. Thus, the preacher's starting point would differ with each varying congregation, but the sermon would contain a consistent salvific message. English utilizes the doctrine of the incarnation to shed light on this idea. As Christ became flesh and ministered to a particular culture in a particular language and setting, he was able to communicate the gospel of God's love by focusing his message on those in his given culture, while explaining a grace available to all people in all cultures. English entices the modern preacher to use Christ's method. Redemption may only be communicated when preachers embody Christ's message in their sermons in a contemporary, comprehensible style. Bridging the ancient faith to the modern culture is, for English, the task of preaching.

The author also addresses the need for missionary preaching to the places of the world which most need to hear the gospel. This preaching needs to be done with a "holy urgency" that requires congregational response. English challenges the church to be unabashed in its calls for public commitment if it is done appropriately within the context of the congregation. It is through preaching to group settings that he finds biblical grounding for calls to commitment, support, and spiritual strength. The book argues that calls for commitment or renewal must be continued as church practice because, as English states, "God's grace calls for an answer" (p. 110). At the same time, English realizes that too much stress placed on public response might encourage a pelagian emphasis upon human actions for conversion rather than recognizing spiritual transforma-

tion as the work of God. English balances this call for preaching conversion in worship with an equal stress upon discipleship. He notes that the preacher's task is not completed at the conversion of his or her listeners. Instead, the minister is charged with both calling people to enter the Kingdom and building up the faith of the congregation. Conversion is only the beginning of holistic preaching. English proposes that the Eucharist be employed as a means for the church's continual renewal of Christian commitment.

A major theological theme in this book is its insistence that no one should be excluded by the preacher from understanding and responding to the gospel. English proposes that this inclusive speech is accomplished by providing accessible points of entry in the sermon for the varying personalities and experiences of the congregation. For the author, this means holding the interests and preaching to the needs of both the saved and unsaved alike. Again, the preacher is called to consider the contextual setting of the congregation beyond the church doors. Preaching becomes a part of worship ("presenting the whole of life to God") by aiding those present to discern and celebrate God's presence in the whole of life. Thus, the sermon and its doctrine must be related holistically to the congregation's life experiences. In this pursuit, English reminds the reader, the Holy Spirit has inspired God's people and will continue to inspire the preacher to proclaim the Scriptures to today's circumstance.

While written for preachers, this text is delightfully readable for anyone interested in preaching or theology. For preachers, church leaders, and lay witnesses alike, this book is helpful for all who yearn for greater clarity regarding how one proclaims the Good News to an increasingly pre-Christian and secular society. English's thematic concern for accurate preaching of the gospel, yet care for comprehensible communication for the congregation resonates in most preachers' homiletical ambitions. This book, like its theme, capably achieves both theological insight and a lucid message.

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Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith. By Carol Lakey Hess. Abingdon Press, 1997, 291 pages.

Ought the name of God be explicit in order to communicate the gospel? One cannot help but ponder this easily divisive question upon a thorough reading of *Caretakers of Our Common House*. Carol Lakey Hess has here woven lesser known biblical texts with stories of women in leadership roles, Reformed theology, human developmental thought and feminist passion into a broadcloth exposition for sensitive education in today's faith communities. While she claims no disinterest in *men's* development, she does accept a rather prophetic mantle and exhorts, persists, needles, and challenges the reader to see and transform doctrine or church practices which have systematically (if not always intentionally) restricted girls' self-development in today's church. Does such a project—admittedly one structured around an obscure woman character granted one verse of action in *Esther*—which convicts, witnesses, and reconciles women (and men) to further commit God-given talents to the church, communicate the gospel? Does such a work, which leaves the Trinitarian perichoretic action of love implicit in its creative flow and persistent invitation to educational reflection, communicate the gospel? The reader must decide. *Caretakers of Our Common House* invites teachers, pastors, and interested laypersons alike into a critical yet hopeful theological conversation aimed at encouraging the specific nurture and empowerment of girls and women of faith.

Hess begins her text with a reappropriation of Reinhold Niebuhr's work, introduced practically by means of Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*. For anyone who has heard a children's sermon involving this well-known story, Hess offers accurate and appropriately biting observations which *alone* ought to be heard. She lauds Niebuhr, however, for the accuracy of his theological conviction even as she recognizes its limits where women are concerned. Contrary to Niebuhr's rather masculine notion of sin, Hess points out that women's tendency to give themselves away—sometimes even in service of others—can still be "an act of sin if it is passive, splits community into those who care and those who assert, and fails to hold other people accountable for their actions" (p. 38). Women and those who desire to be loving toward the women in our faith communities are challenged to examine their own theological assumptions regarding sin and traditional spiritual exercises practiced in past and present.

In the next two chapters, Hess reflects upon the "dance of human development" which both moves toward the differentiation between an autonomous self and a relational self and relies on genuine caring in relationship with others. She critically incorporates the work of Robert Kegan to argue that women's development is often stymied at the inter-personal self, which finds its security in others (p. 65). She argues for a path of self-realization beyond this stasis and calls for concurrent women's self-realization *and* re-claiming of authentic and communicative relationship between men and women in faith communities today. After naming the sensitivity necessary for women's legitimate voice, Hess urges women to practice genuine caring—empathic, conversational and prophetic caring—in this relationality (p. 96). Faith communities need to nurture and support humanity, to foster diverse dialogue, and to hear prophetic indictments. *Caretakers* is a creative articulation of the means by which the church of today may further develop facility in these tasks.

The final chapter of this section begins to direct the argument of the text. Informed by the independent and biblically prophetic example of Deborah, Hess names leadership as (1) a naming of our passion for justice, (2) partnership and the sharing of power, and (3) a groping toward fairness and peace. These descriptive and prescriptive categories inductively direct the reader through the mid-section of the book. Chapter Four names Hess' passion for justice with regard to women's struggles with eating disorders. She offers a distinct interpretation of anorexia as "a desperate attempt to grasp and take hold of one's life" (p. 134). Young women, in this interpretation, are bodily naming a passion for justice and freedom from gender or sex roles which alienate them from themselves. Chapter Five explores the partnerships among women and between women and men which must be recognized for the diverse and discerning wrestling that they involve. Chapter Six, the most directly educationally focused section, describes the challenging pedagogy which is required for hard dialogue and deep connections in communities of faith. Conversational education, highly sensitive to women's (socialized) tendency of relational learning, clearly embodies a groping toward fairness and peace. Hess clearly answers her initial question, "Can caring families and communities of faith, specifically churches, make a difference in the outcome of her daughter's development and the development of other girls and women?" with a theologically inspired, practically discerned "yes." She has given today's church (and, I would argue, the larger cultural climate) an engaging and provocative (pun

intended) invitation to convict, witness for, and reconcile women to the continuing development of today's faith communities.

Caretakers of Our Common House marks an inspiring match between women's educational thought and theological reflection—a significant accomplishment—but I believe it falls prey to the divisive struggle, and perhaps falls into the communicative divide, between these two. Hess' two-edged proclamation desperately needs to be heard in theological education today. Her thought—driven by, grounded in, and permeated through with Reformed theology and feminism as it is—may be expressed in such a way, however, that many theological educators will not hear what she has to say. Her lack of explicit reference to the Trinity (which I believe would strengthen her intentions in an admittedly complex way) suggests less grounding in Christian tradition than first supposed. Jesus, born of Mary, finds little explicit mention as well, even, as I would argue, his voice of grace and liberation can easily be heard. The explicit Reformed expression which would insure the attention of the theological community remains unseen. Hess' message could, ironically, be deemed "too much" and dismissed from the purview of those gathered.

So we return to my initial question–ought the name of God be explicit in order to communicate the gospel? No. Carol Lakey Hess has exhorted us, as communities of faith, to convict sin in its individual and communal (systemic) expressions, to proclaim God's grace in active, embodied reconciliation, and to serve the Body of Christ in lived thanksgiving, difficult as that may be. While *Caretakers of Our Common House* may rely too optimistically on its readers to make explicit connections to its theological inspirations, it still speaks the Word so many women and so many communities of faith need to hear. My hope is that such women *and* such communities will listen both explicitly *and* implicitly. After all, on that final day of salvation history, will our savior be named Jesus *again* or will we recognize in him/her the Christ-like work of God—conviction, reconciliation, and faithful commitment—and thereby say in our voice, praise be to God? Time will tell.

— LISA E. HESS
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Coinage in the Roman Economy 300 B.C. to A.D. 700. By Kenneth W. Harl. Ancient Society and History. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, x + 533 pages with 36 plates.

As the title suggests, Harl's new volume positions itself at the intersection of numismatic studies and economic and social history. The coordinating assumption is that coins ought to be studied "both as fiscal instruments of the Roman state and as the medium of exchange employed by the Roman public" (p. 1). Harl's underlying argument is against two prevalent opinions. The first is of those who minimize the significance of the role of coinage and the second, of those who see the commercial role of Roman coinage as merely incidental to its fiscal purpose.

Harl's historical scope is comprehensive, covering a millennium of Roman influence, a widening geographic expanse of territory, and imperial, provincial, and civic coinages. Harl manages this ambitious goal by conjoining diachronic and synchronic approaches. The first two-thirds of the book surveys the historical development of Roman coinage and economy; the final third concentrates on the coins in fiscus, commerce, and labor.

For the period of the emergence of Roman coinage, the comparison with Hellenistic coinage is illuminating. The evolution of Hellenistic coinage had been connected to commerce; in the Roman empire, it hinged on imperialism. This, in turn, determined the nature of the monetization in the Roman empire. Citizens drafted into the Roman army were paid in denominations smaller than those standard in trade. Consequently, instead of the tetradrachm, the denarius triumphed with the emergence of Roman political sway in the Mediterranean. The Principate excelled at interlocking imperial, provincial, and civic coinages and its stable fiscal policy contributed much to the economic prosperity legendary for this era.

Harl's thesis surfaces clearly in his treatment of the currency reform under Diocletian (284–305 CE), subsequent to the great debasement in Roman monetary history (180–274 CE). It has often been assumed that inflation was countered by exacting tax in kind. The evidence, however, suggests that taxation in coins and in kind always coexisted and that coins did not suffer the supposed disuse. The inflation under Gallienus, Claudius II, and Aurelian (*ensemble* 260–275 CE) indeed succeeded in staving off political collapse with the increased employment of soldiers and officials. Instead of returning to a "natural economy," Diocletian planned for a new

silver mint, the nummus, a silver-clad replacement of the aurelianianus, along with copper fractions and silver argentei to replace all other currencies. He recalled old money and struck new coins in quantities unparalleled until modern times. His mistake was that he failed to regulate the volume of the new mint carefully. Moreover, in response to rising prices and the public mistrust of the new coins (following the massive debasement of the previous decades), he revalued the coins without changing the standard. As Harl notes, "He aimed correctly, but he failed in details" (p. 157).

Harl clarifies the exact nature of the relationship between the fiscal and commercial aspects of coins in the synchronic chapters entitled "Government's Aims and Needs" and "Coins in the Cities and Markets of the Roman World." Helpful diagrams (pp. 242–46) illustrate how Roman financial departments directed the flow of coins by regulation of the supply, expenditures to meet the demands of the budget, and taxation. The disseminated money reached the markets and welded together the life of the Roman world (cf. John Chrysostom: "We do it all through coins"). The dimorphism of city and country did not limit coinage to the cities, for the dynamic of markets regulated an expansion and contraction of the money supply from center to periphery. Along with civic building enterprises, festivals were an important engine of monetary movement.

Here the main argument surfaces in its synchronic form. Harl challenges the widespread opinion that governing decurions pitted coinage and its reforms against the populous, particularly the rural population. The low yield of coins in rural sites is often cited as evidence. Yet this is owing to factors inherent in the archaeological record, such as the nature of finds in public locales. The literary evidence overwhelmingly supports price and wage quotes in coin across the board. Fiscal oppression and bureaucratic corruption is a regular feature during various periods; however, Egyptian tax registers, legal documents, and the coins themselves fail to confirm the supposed evasion of coins. The construct of an underdeveloped and exploited rural economy (e.g., M. Weber and M. Finley) needs revision.

In terms of sources, Harl commands the range of numismatic material and is conversant with the plethora of literary and epigraphic sources. Records of soldiers' wages enable Harl to trace inflation, debasement, and monetary stability over the time span of the Roman empire. Finally, archaeological evidence is used with skill, not only for Rome and Italy, but the rest of Europe, Northern Africa, and the Near East as well. Over thirty pages of coin plates with meticulous glossing are an elegant addition to

this important volume. A helpful glossary makes it even more accessible. With the increasing interest in the social world of the Second Temple period in Palestine, this book should be used to supplement and qualify a singular reliance on the works of M. Finley.

— GERALD MICHAEL BILKES
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume 1: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1–1.2. By Mark S. Smith. E. J. Brill, 1994, xxxvi + 446 pages with 47 plates.

What one finds in Volume 1 of Smith's *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* (*UBC*) is what we have come to expect of him: a copiously researched and documented, highly thorough and detailed treatment that is simultaneously exhaustive and economical, insightful and erudite. *UBC* is nothing short of a massive commentary project on the Baal epic found at modern Ras Shamra, the ancient city of Ugarit, which is arguably the most important extrabiblical resource available for understanding the Canaanite religion that is both font and foil for so much of ancient Israelite religion. *UBC* Volume 1 covers the tablets designated as KTU 1.1–1.2. A subsequent volume(s) will cover KTU 1.3–1.6 (p. xxviii).

Smith's method is straightforward and follows standard commentary procedure: After an extensive introduction (pp. 1–114) that dates the tablets, discusses their order, classifies the literary genre of the cycle, and treats its development, grammatical dating, and major interpretations (Smith himself opts for a religio-political interpretation), Smith moves through the extant text of KTU 1.1–1.2. For every column he provides a bibliography (including text editions, studies, and translations), transcription of the text with translation and vocalization (if possible), extensive textual notes on the readings, and detailed commentary. The commentary is further subdivided according to sections/units and, with the exception of KTU 1.2 II (which preserves only fragments of 16 lines), is prefaced with an introduction and (if possible) a discussion of poetic parallelism and word/syllable counts. Three excurses compliment the work: "The Marzeah in the Ugaritic Texts" (pp. 140–44; surprisingly, P. D. Miller's edition of

KTU 3.9 isn't cited or included in the bibliography); "The Homes of El and the Divine Council" (pp. 225–34); and "The God Athtar" (pp. 240–50).

This work is truly a gold mine of data; everywhere the reader finds a rich repository of valuable information—even the list of abbreviations and preface are educational! The volume ends with a massive bibliography (pp. 363–401), extensive indexes of texts and languages (including Ugaritic citations [selective for KTU 1.1 and 1.2], texts, grammar, and vocabulary; Akkadian and Sumerian texts; Arabic texts; Bible, Inscriptions, Intertestamental Literature and Dead Sea Scrolls, and Rabbinic sources; Classical texts; Egyptian texts; Hittite texts; and Indian texts), of subjects, and of authors cited (pp. 403–46). The index of biblical texts is especially useful for those interested in seeing if Smith draws a particular biblical text into dialogue with the Ugaritic material. The bibliography and indexes further underscore the massive learning necessary for a project like this. In true *religionsgeschichtlich* style, Smith ranges across not only the massive Ugaritic corpus, but also the entire ancient Near Eastern world, into Egypt and the Mediterranean, in order to track down leads, references, cognates—even later reflexes of the Baal epic. All of this is most impressive, as is Smith's attention to the iconographical data whenever possible and pertinent (see, e.g., pp. 225–26). The volume ends with 47 plates of the tablets taken by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman of the West Semitic Research project. The photographs are fantastically clear and eminently readable, except where the preservation of the tablets has been less than ideal. Even at those points, the Zuckermans' amazing photographic work makes the impossible-to-read seem at least worthy of a try. I made a photocopy of two of the plates and it was as clear and readable as most published plates! Unfortunately, unlike KTU 1.1 II and III (Plate 1), 1.1 V and IV (Plate 13), and 1.2 III (Plates 25–26), there is no plate that shows KTU 1.2 I and IV in their entirety. While such a plate wouldn't add to the clarity of the text of 1.2 I and IV or to their reading (for which see Plates 39–47), it is often helpful to see what a text looks like—especially in an epigraphic context such as this. Similarly, while the photographs are so clear as to almost make line drawings unnecessary, it would have been instructive—especially in the broken sections—to have had hand copies (but see p. xxx).

Among the many things that are to be lauded in this volume—and there are many—is that whenever possible Smith includes with his transcriptions of the Ugaritic (a language that, apart from the alephs, is orthographi-

cally vowelless) a vocalized text. This should prove especially valuable to beginning students as they compare their own readings against that of a prominent Ugaritologist. Still, while undoubtedly one of the book's strengths, it is also perilous to vocalize, as Smith is well aware (p. xxxii). The problem is simply that vocalizations are notoriously individual (if not idiosyncratic) and thus easy to dispute; hence, many scholars refrain from publishing them. I personally found it puzzling that in broken contexts Smith would sometimes translate, but not vocalize. A translation implies an understanding of the grammar and syntax (cf. p. xxxiii), and thus if one can translate, one can also vocalize. Similarly, Smith occasionally reconstructs in vocalized sections, but will typically refrain from such in the transcriptions. This results in a vocalized text that is sometimes different and more extensive (in the lacunae) than the transcribed text. Even so, Smith is certainly right to proceed cautiously since his work is intended to be a standard reference work, not a platform for highly speculative reconstructions. And, to his credit, Smith is clear about his format and procedure in the preface (pp. xxii-xxxvi; esp. pp. xxix, xxxii).

The genre and nature of the volume also prevent Smith from taking time to explain fully his vocalizations. Sometimes, I wondered why a D (Hebrew Piel) stem was chosen instead of the G (Hebrew Qal) or vice versa, especially when a cognate language attested to the meaning or particular nuance in question in the opposite form. Even at those points where Smith does take time to justify his vocalization, he will not convince everyone. For instance, he states that his vocalization of Ugaritic *bd* ("from the hand of"; KTU 1.2 IV 13) as *bâdi* "represents the contraction of **bi-yadi* to **bâdi*" (p. 322 n. 182). He cites several scholars as well as a Canaanite gloss found in the Amarna letters, *ba-di-ú* (EA 245:35), which glosses Akkadian *ina qātišu* ("in his hand"). To be sure, dropping intervocalic *y* often results in the lengthening of the vowel, especially in Hebrew, but in this case perhaps it is simpler to posit V_1–*y*-V_2 (i.e., vowel 1 - *y* - vowel 2) > V_2. That is, **bi-yadi* >**badi*. The Amarna gloss is certainly not conclusive given the ambiguities of cuneiform, but one should nevertheless note that the "a" vowel is not orthographically long.

Without a doubt, Smith has good reasons for his decisions, and my critiques would probably not stand for long if he were to respond to them. I raise them not to critique Smith so much as to lift up his example for other Ugaritic scholars to emulate. Indubitably a vocalization can be debated.

But the advantages of including one far outweigh any disadvantages (p. xxxiii).

UBC contains a number of typographical errors, but these are typically insignificant in nature, easily corrected while reading, and thus not highly bothersome. Smith himself has provided a brief corrigenda to *UBC* 1 in *Ugarit-Forschungen* 26 (1994) 455, though these corrections are confined to the transcriptions and translation. Occasionally, I found that the references provided parenthetically or in the footnotes did not correlate with the bibliographical entry. In these cases, however, the proper entry could be discerned by comparing the page numbers in the citation.

These critiques are rather minor and are intended to support the work, not pick it apart. In short, Smith's *UBC* is a monumental achievement and is to be hailed as a landmark in the field. It has certainly set the standard for any and all future commentaries on Ugaritic literature, and such are certainly deserving of production (e.g., the KRT epic, Aqhat, KTU 1.23, etc.), especially as biblical scholars have long been wont to cull such texts for comparative data, often without sufficient nuance or ability. In short, Smith's work is foundational for any and all students who might have reason to take up the Baal epic, certainly one of the masterpieces of Levantine (and thus Western) literature. Despite Smith's massive output and amazing work pace, it is to be hoped that he completes his commentary as soon as possible. When that is done, the scholarly world will be even more in his debt than it already is.

[Other reviews: Thomas Römer, *ETR* 71 (1996) 281.]

— BRENT A. STRAWN
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Dialektische Theologie nach Karl Barth. By Dietrich Korsch. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996, XVIII + 322.

This book offers a collection of 15 intricate essays, most of them written between 1989 and 1995, by the German theologian Dietrich Korsch, professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Passau. Slightly revised and updated, they are brought together here in three parts, which deal respectively with the historical location (pp. 3–92), the theological structure (pp. 93–187), and the philosophical idea (pp. 189–311) of dialectical the-

ology. These headings already indicate that Korsch does not work within the conventional paradigm which understands dialectical theology as a dated movement that either salvaged Protestant theology or fall back into pre-enlightened Orthodoxy. Both variations miss the mark and hinder rather than help fruitful debate. Instead, Korsch's goal is to reconstruct dialectical theology as a Foundational Theology of evangelical Christianity (p. viii). At its core, this theology reflects upon the unity of the difference that constitutes the essence of Christianity, i.e., the contrast between God and humanity, developed in the antithesis of judgment and grace and in the concept of the human being as *simul iustus et peccator*. Two ensuing distinctions are central. First, the difference between faith and dogmatics, or between the overcoming of the contradiction of God and humanity and the theological reflection upon this event. Second, the difference between dogmatics and philosophy of religion, reflecting the different ways to express the unity of the human person: on the one hand through the certainty of faith, on the other hand through the coherence of self-consciousness.

Korsch does not attempt to develop his project in this book, but some basics are laid out. It is his ambition to construct a systematic theology that is at once speculative and dialectical, thus being able to dialogue with the tradition of German Idealism and its reflections about human self-understanding in relation to God. The motto of the book comes from Karl Barth, who is usually less known for such statements: "Not every 'speculative theology' tells the truth. But even a theology that tells the truth is 'speculative.'" Korsch's approach also implies the will to overcome Barth's own polemical stance against liberal theology; he wants to historicize Barth's work and bring it into conversation with traditions that the Swiss theologian declared to be obsolete. Finally, he appraises the dialectical theology of the 1920s as a "theology of crisis," and he interprets it as a reaction to the process of modernity, resulting in the separation of church denominations, Christian religion, and civil society. Since this is an on-going process, Protestant theology is confronted with the continuous challenge of testing the basic insights of the Reformation over against the development of modernity. Throughout the book, Korsch asserts the significance of religion and theology for contemporary culture and society.

The essays of part one and two discuss various aspects of Barth's earlier and later theology and bring it into conversation with philosophers such as H. Cohen, E. Bloch, and G. Lukács, or theologians such as F. Schleiermacher, W. Herrmann, and P. Tillich. The first essay, for instance,

points to the concepts of the hidden God and of the self-estranged human being as key factors in the development of modernity. These concepts are related to the experience that a unified world-view based on God as the guarantor of the human self has been irreversibly lost. Since religion can be understood as providing resources to confront and work through differences—an insight taken up from the sociology of religion—the question becomes whether it is also able to cope with this new reality. For Korsch, the Christian idea of a God who became human is able to take on this challenge. In order to explain this thesis, he traces the idea of the hidden God from Luther (the belief in God's hidden providence is grounded in but cannot be explained by the contingent experience of salvation through Christ), via Pascal (the experience of being lost in the universe serves the purpose of giving oneself up entirely to God), to Barth's *Commentary on Romans*. According to Korsch, Barth rejects Pascal's dualism between the hiddenness of God in the world and its removal through faith. Instead, he claims that God remains hidden even in His revelation in Jesus and that the human self, as far as it exists in opposition towards God as the other, does not remain identical when it is confronted with God. Moreover, Barth points to Jesus' resurrection, which signifies that Jesus himself has his identity nowhere else than in his being for the other; exactly for this reason he is God's representative on earth. Therefore, human existence is qualified as being with the other. All this corresponds to the fundamental insight of Reformation theology that the individual life of the Christian is not grounded in his or her relation to the world or to the self but in God, so that otherness and strangeness become a constitutive part of the self.

Barth's relation to Luther is the theme of the opening essay in part two. Both Luther and Barth reject a concept of faith as an act of subjective self-realization through an active life. They insist that faith finds its foundation only in the history of Jesus Christ and that it relies on the recognition of our participation in this history. In particular, it is Barth's christological revision of the doctrine of predestination, which explains why the subjective experience of justification can be seen as the ultimate truth of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, dogmatic theology does neither replace nor facilitate the existential act of faith, since propositional truth and existential truth is not the same. For Korsch, this latter distinction also provides a means to counter appeals to "higher forces" which are invoked to justify various forms of social or cultural coercion; theology's public function

then becomes to call to mind that a general truth is only warranted if it can be appropriated individually.

A similar function of theology is outlined in the second essay of part one, which explains the relevance of the concept of Acrisis" for dialectical theology then and now. It starts with the observation that the foundational character of the crisis perceived in the 1920s was discovered by Marxist thinkers like Bloch (crisis as the context of a utopian consciousness) or Lukács (crisis as the reason for revolution) and sharpened theologically by Tillich and Barth. Korsch then shows how this radical conception of the crisis reveals the interrelation between social theory and theology, or between economics and religion. At the end of the essay he claims that the plurality of late modernity is an expression of the persistence of crisis, since it is always accompanied by the knowledge of a free community and society as a condition for the fulfillment of modernity. As long as any form of oppression and absence of freedom is real, the absolute crisis casts its shadow on the conditions of modernity itself.

Two essays in part one and part two bear a more constructive character. The first is called "Theology in Post-Modernity. The Contribution of Karl Barth" (pp. 74–91). Korsch claims that the discussion about the transition from modernity to post-modernity has been anticipated by theological reflection upon the "pluralization of the Absolute" (p. 74). With Max Weber he defines modernity as a process of rationalization according to the principle of utility, which leads to a new polytheism of values; and with Ernst Troeltsch he considers the ethical and religious necessity of monotheism to prevent a general social catastrophe. In view of these theories, he then discusses three different types of Barth interpretation (Rendtorff, Marquardt, Schellong), which have in common an emphasis on Barth's critical stance towards modern theology or modern bourgeois society. Korsch himself suggests a different evaluation of Barth's project. To this end, he shows that what is called post-modernism brings to the fore the crucial modern ambiguity between universal reason and individual existence. On the one hand, there are counter-concepts to the principle of rationality, such as the will to power (Nietzsche), the disclosure of Being (Heidegger), or the sovereignty of the self (Bataille). On the other hand, we see anarchistic models (Feyerabend, Lyotard) that refuse to hold on to any over-arching model to interpret "all that is the case." However, both attempts to break the spell of reason do not achieve what they aim for, namely the liberation of the individual. Korsch argues that this goal re-

quires a clearer emphasis on the concrete other and not the mere celebration of otherness as such. Only if post-modern thinking is able to focus on relations between particulars, will it be able to accept and to reconcile differences. Korsch further argues that Barth was well aware of the modern question of how theology could be done after Christianity had lost its unifying cultural significance. This becomes, above all, visible in the dialectical approach to theology: Barth no longer constructs an original unity from a given reality. Instead, he looks for the principle that by itself enables theology to explain and comprehend a pluralistic reality, and he finds it in christology. In the doctrine of reconciliation Barth thus develops a model of christological universality that does not exclude human individuality, since it is tied to the elect human being Jesus of Nazareth and allows individuals to understand themselves anew in the light of Jesus' person and work.

The latter aspect is further developed in a shorter essay with the title "Vere Homo. The Humanity of Jesus Christ According to Karl Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation" (pp. 178–87). Here, Korsch argues that Barth is a modern theologian in the sense that he does not assume a general human nature, insists on human self-realization, and finally proposes a non-traditional view of genuine human existence. Barth modifies the classical two-natures doctrine by developing a relational model of the hypostatic union of the person of Christ that starts from the unity of the person. This move is grounded in Barth's doctrine of election as God's self-determination *ad extra*, which includes the human existence of Jesus. For the person of Christ this means that, on the one hand, the self-determination of the Son of God to become a human being is the self-realization of the divine being through the other. On the other hand, the human life of Jesus is the original realization of true human nature. Still, neither the christological dogma nor the gospel stories lead us further than to the question of the Whence of Jesus' life. The communication of this life itself, and thus the true knowledge of Jesus, depends on his self-communication through the power of his Spirit. By this event, human beings are determined in their self-realization in the same way as Jesus, namely by the God who raised him from the dead.

These reflections go together with the final chapter of the preceding essay, in which Korsch discusses at length the Barth interpretation of T. Rendtorff, F. Wagner, W. Sparn, and F.W. Graf (pp. 146–77). This essay from 1981 remains a welcome contribution, since it is one of very few re-

sponses to an important critique of Barth's theology. Korsch suggests describing the structure of Barth's theology as "a theory of the principal singular fact" (p. 170, with reference to *Church Dogmatics* IV/3, § 69). The phrase refers to Barth's key-concept that Jesus Christ is the one and unique Word of God. This Word does not exclude but includes other words. In contrast to Falk Wagner's view, Korsch argues that Barth does employ the distinction between a principle and the theory that works from the principle but cannot justify it. Human words always remain formally different from the Word of God; when they coincide materially with it, this coincidence is grounded in Jesus Christ alone. This means that theology remains theoretical as far as it is not realized through itself, although it names the conditions for such a realization, namely the event of God's Word. On the whole, Korsch regards Barth's openness for the varieties of Jesus Christ's self-manifestation as a constructive freedom that is a sign of theological progress. Certainly, such an evaluation of Barth's project is still largely unheard of in the English-speaking world.

The third part of the collection offers various essays dealing with the relationship between faith and reason. The first of them offers an original and intriguing analysis of Barth's book on Anselm's "Proslogion," in particular on the connection of theological method with the theme of the proofs for the existence of God. Once more, Korsch argues that Barth's seemingly anti-modern turn is in fact one step towards a critical reflection on modern problems, in this case of the question whether the self-constitution of reason excludes all theological claims about faith as being grounded in God. Moreover, we find an essay on Hermann Cohen's concept of religion, on Fichte, the personality of God and of human beings, another reflection on the task of contemporary christology, and a comparison of Schelling and Schleiermacher on the Spirit as the medium of reflection and religion.

The last essay of the book returns to the theme of God's hiddenness and relates it to the dichotomy between theological claims to truth and subjective assertions of certainty. Korsch argues that God's hiddenness, being different from mere absence, can be regarded as the precondition of God's presence in faith. He explains this thesis by describing the logic of hiddenness as the state when something is present and absent, i.e., when being and non-being occur together. Spinoza's dictum that "every definition is negation" is a good illustration of this structure. Afterwards, it was Hegel who recognized that a definition (*Bestimmung*) is complete only

when it also reflects on its negation and keeps present that which is not defined, that although the process of definition can be completed ideally, it is always accompanied by a moment of actual indefiniteness (*Unbestimmtheit*). Now religion is the form of dealing with this indefinite moment of interpretation, which has consequences for the theological concept of the self and of God. On the one hand, human dignity depends ultimately on God alone, and on the other hand, in the history of Jesus Christ God faces the conflict of human self-realization apart from God. The idea of God is defined by Jesus' death and resurrection: in Jesus' death God encounters death and in Jesus' resurrection God finds Himself in the communion of the Spirit. In other words, God's being is defined by the event in which God looses and finds Himself through the absolute difference (p. 308).

Two comments in conclusion. First, Korsch's remarks about God's self-abandonment are clearly reminiscent of Hegel's speculative Good Friday. This is a bold move that is probably hard to swallow for both Barthians and theologians who adhere to the liberal tradition. Still, we should not dismiss it too hastily but rather ask what it may tell us about the self-understanding of theology. Korsch argues that theology needs to recognize two different ways of reasoning, if it takes serious that it cannot generate religion or be substituted by religion. One way is leading from religion towards God (Schleiermacher), the other one from the idea of God to religion (Hegel). This two-fold way reflects the predicament of rationality in the modern age, i.e., that it has to reflect on the limits of reason. At the same time, the difference between religion and theology indicates that God's presence in the Spirit does not contradict the activity of human reason.

This leads to the second point. In the preface, Korsch says that all the essays circumscribe the presence of the otherwise hidden God in the Holy Spirit (p. ix). Except for the essay on Schelling and Schleiermacher however, his constructive proposals are all in the field of Christology. It is not yet clear how Korsch wants to construct his own pneumatology. He locates it theologically between Schleiermacher and Barth and philosophically between the later Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. He also asserts its significance for a theological acknowledgment of individuality and particularity. Nevertheless, the statement that "in pneumatology religion participates spiritually in God's Spirit" (p. 225) suggests a more traditional panentheistic view, in which the world is understood as being always already "in God" (p. 224). How close does this idea cohere with the claim that God's rela-

tion to the world is defined particularly by the history of Jesus Christ as "God's self-interpetation in the world?" (p. 224).

On the whole this book is a building block of a larger project that merits close attention from both systematic theologians and philosophers of religion. With Barth beyond Barth, as it were. One concern may be how attractive these essays will be to an English speaking audience. Some of them provide excellent introductory material regarding the history of 20th century theology and the genesis of Barth's dialectical theology, while others may be difficult to understand without knowledge of the main features of German Idealism. Be that as it may, this is one of the most ambitious and exciting constructive theological projects that has recently been proposed.

— MATTHIAS GOCKEL
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation. By Alan J. Torrance. T & T Clark, 1996, 388 pages.

One of the joys of *Persons in Communion* is the opportunity it provides for engaging a work in which genuine respect for the thought being critiqued permeates every page. The subject matter that Alan J. Torrance critiques in this book is Karl Barth's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. Marrying the subject matter to his own method, Torrance describes his single aim as threefold. He explores not only the appropriateness of the use of the word "persons" to describe the members of the Trinity, but also how trinitarian language functions, as well as the underlying theological models various trinitarian theologies employ (p. 1). While admitting that Barth's doctrine will be used "as something of a foil," Torrance is careful to explain that "the intention of this book is not to undermine [Barth's theological work] but rather to build upon it" (p. 6). This respect is manifested in the care with which Torrance proceeds in his assessment of Barth and in the construction of his own theory in light of his critique. Torrance's primary intent is to improve upon Barth by bringing Barth more into conformity with his own stated method of *nachdenken,* but Torrance does not hesitate gently and firmly to correct where he determines it more appro-

priate to do so. *Persons in Communion* certainly does not spare one from scrutinizing particularly vulnerable areas in Barth's theology; however, one is also not allowed to escape a lesson in appreciation for the one who in Torrance's eyes is clearly esteemed as a "theological giant."

Torrance joins the company of those who are dissatisfied with Barth's explicit rejection of the term "person" in favor of *Seinsweise* to describe the members of the Trinity. However, Torrance is neither wholly satisfied with contemporary attempts to salvage this terminology, nor does he allow their interpretations of Barth to stand unchallenged. Critique of the the theories of Rahner, Zizioulas, LaCugna, Jüngel, Moltmann, and Pannenberg in relation to both Barth's and Torrance's own constructions are scattered throughout the work. For this reason alone *Persons in Communion* shows itself to be a helpful theological resource, bringing together "under one roof" the various critiques of Barth's proposal and presenting the reader with a broad perspective on a variety of issues currently surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity.

Torrance wonders whether Barth has been true to his own method in rejecting the terminology of "person" in favor of "modes of being." It is his belief that this choice has the negative effect of limiting Barth's interpretation of revelation itself and has harmful repercussions on other doctrines as well. While rejecting the claim that Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is the result of a purely grammatical analysis of the concept of revelation, he is dissatisfied with Barth's depiction of revelation as self-*communication* rather than *communion.* He would continue to make use of Barth's understanding of revelation as *semantic participation*, while at the same time refocusing Barth's primary emphasis on this concept, enclosing it within the larger context of *doxological participation.* Torrance presents his own theory as a "worship-oriented model" which seeks to demonstrate that "divine communication cannot be separated from a proper theology of divine communion" (p. 4). Revelation is *intrinsic* to God as a thoroughly perichoretic activity according to Torrance, and should be understood in terms of divine creativity as well as redemption.

In the event of revelation, we are by the power of the Holy Spirit through Christ's vicarious humanity made to participate in Christ's own communion with the Father. It is this participation in Christ which Torrance feels gets short shrift in Barth's treatment of revelation. He is left unsatisfied with its tendency to depict the Holy Spirit as enabling human response to the divine address apart from the continuing work of the In-

carnate Word on behalf of humankind. In order to clear this up, Torrance is determined to reintroduce the priestly office of Christ into the doctrine of revelation, reintegrating revelation, reconciliation and atonement and bringing theology and worship again into a more explicit and integral relationship. In light of this emphasis on revelation as communion, Torrance feels he must move beyond critiquing Barth in his faithfulness to his own methodology and challenge the method itself. Is it really most appropriate to speak in terms of Nach*denken*, Torrance wonders, when revelation affects a person not only intellectually but holistically, is concerned with not simply the changed mind, but the changed being of a person?

Torrance maintains that speaking of revelation in terms of semantic participation and choosing among terms to speak of God requires a much fuller interpretation of the philosophy of language than was offered by Barth (and by other contemporary theories as well). In light of this, he devotes a very full chapter to the discussion of theological language, revisiting and expanding upon the *analogia entis/fidei* dispute and suggesting that a way out of the impasse is to make use of the category of *analogia communionis*. Torrance is concerned to move beyond Barth by exploring the concept of God's being-in-communion both immanently and economically. In thoughtful and respectful disagreement with Barth, he is confident that it is "possible, meaningful, and appropriate" to describe the members of the Trinity in terms of "person."

In presenting his own critique Torrance is determined to keep his readers from easy dismissal of Barth, especially a dismissal based on ignorance of Barth's intentions, concerns and way of proceeding theologically. Torrance's first two chapters are dedicated to familiarizing his reader with Barthian methodology and its application to his doctrine of God as set forth in the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*. It is here that Torrance describes Barth's own concerns with using "person" for the members of the Trinity and presents critical response from contemporary theologians. He lifts up Barth's continued use of the term "science" to describe the discipline of theology and wonders why Barth, in spite of his many valid concerns with the way in which that word had been used in secular contexts and misused in the theological realm, could not have allowed for the possibility for the term "person" to be commandeered in a similar way.

Exploring in the second chapter the relationship between revelation and divine identity, between God's creative and God's redemptive purposes, Torrance concludes that Barth's own treatment falls short of its goal of

describing the revelation event in more "personal" terms. Again it is Barth's determination to speak in terms of *Seinsweise* instead of "persons" which is considered detrimental to an appropriate conception of intradivine relatedness and mutuality, but an emphasis on the singularity of the divine Subject confronting the human subject as threefold repetition in the revelatory event is also rendered problematic—not only does it fail to depict adequately the truly perichoretic nature of the participation in grace which best describes the event of revelation but it also fails to take seriously the human element in the event, especially in its refusal to emphasize the necessity of the vicarious humanity of Jesus Christ responding properly with an "Amen" on our behalf. Torrance maintains that his own worship-model offers "a more integrative conception of the theological programme as a whole and...a profounder exposition of the one *Anknüpfungspunkt*, the point of contact (at-one-ment) between the divine and human, which is not simply an event of divine address but the whole humanity of Christ in his life of communion with the Father, as we are brought not merely to 'connect with' it but to participate in it by the Spirit" (p. 119).

Torrance's fourth chapter moves to consider the form and content of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity itself, and then concludes with extended exposition and critique of the doctrines of Rahner and Zizioulas, concentrating especially on their understanding of divine personhood. It is in the final chapter, "Moving Beyond Barth's Revelational Model," that Torrance sets forth his own doxological model most fully. This is carried out in critical dialogue with Moltmann and LaCugna. Here, too, Torrance sets forth a more properly understood concept of semantic participation, recognizing that it is only in Christ that semantic at-one-ment is achieved.

As Torrance concludes his work, he explains that what he is after is essentially a "controlled reinterpretation" of Barth. Where he believes Barth's concept of divine Triunity ultimately has the greatest negative impact is on his sacramentology:

> "One of the greatest disappointments of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, therefore (in particular, the arguments of Volume Four, part 4), is his failure to appreciate the anthropological significance of the sacraments. His reluctance to endorse infant baptism and his weak doctrine of the Eucharist point to an inadequacy in his appreciation of the continuing priesthood of Christ, and, at root, an insufficient grasp

> of the theology of communion...The weaknesses were inherent in (and further confirmed by) his treatment of the doctrine of revelation from the very beginning of the *Church Dogmatics*" (p. 367).

Torrance's book certainly accomplishes one of its purposes; it refuses to allow its reader to dismiss lightly the theology of Karl Barth. His own critique of and attempt to move beyond Barth offers a series of real challenges that must drive one back to reexamine the *Church Dogmatics* full of questions. Is it enough to visit only the first part of the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics* in order to grasp fully Barth's concept of intradivine communion and human participation in it? Torrance's passing reference to the fourth volume in a footnote in his own fourth chapter peaked, leaving me wondering if Barth's doctrine of reconciliation might shed more light on the subject than was brought by Torrance into the discussion at hand. And what about the second volume, in which Barth allows a new understanding of the doctrine of Election to reshape his discussion of the divine nature? Might not this further elaboration of his doctrine of God bring forth important elements to consider? Granted, Barth most explicitly sets forth his doctrine of the Trinity in his primary volume, but the threads are drawn out and developed as his work on the Dogmatics progresses. Does this development matter?

Torrance's emphasis on revelation as communion with the Triune God by means of participation in the vicarious humanity of Christ and his suggestion that Barth did not adequately grasp a theology of communion challenges the reader operating with a previous "hermeneutic of trust" towards Barth's thought to return to Barth's discussions having to do with "epistemic participation." Is it true that Barth does not *understand*, or that Barth chooses for very particular reasons to speak differently than does Torrance of the relation between redeemed humanity and the Triune God, of the kind of participation that is made to exist by God between God and human? A similar challenge is raised in light of Torrance's critique of Barth's emphasis on the singularity of the divine Subject in revelation. Torrance suggests that Barth is using the concept of singularity too literally and without fully developing the concept of perichoresis. Torrance himself wonders, "Why is there no consideration of the possibility that reference may be made to a divine 'we'," maintaining that "the notion of God as indissoluble single subject is not required by Christian monotheism (from which we would certainly not wish to depart) and fails of itself

to allow sufficiently for the kind of distinctions which require to be made here" (p. 220). Torrance raises again the issue of speaking of the Oneness of God in light of the one God of Israel's revelation in Jesus Christ. Is Barth's interpretation of divine singularity, Barth's emphasis on the unity of God irredeemably problematic, especially in light of interfaith dialogue?

Torrance's work does most convincingly argue the appropriateness of taking up again Barth's rejected term "person" to speak of the members of the Trinity. In doing so, Torrance shows a genuine sensitivity to Barth's concerns, but aptly demonstrates that Barth's own method can be used to redeem the term. Taking seriously the challenges of a wide variety of contemporary formulations of the doctrine of the Trinity and attempting to integrate them as far as he deems appropriate as well as taking seriously the challenges of linguistic philosophy without becoming enslaved to them, Torrance raises a whole host of theological issues which are deserving of greater consideration than can be presented here and provides the theological community with a rigorous and exciting reformulation of the doctrine of the Trinity which is well worth engaging.

— JENNIFER GEORGE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement. Edited by Gerald H. Anderson, Robert T. Coote, Norman A. Horner, and James M. Phillips. Orbis Books, 1994, 654 pages.

If one were looking for an introduction to some of the most influential persons in the modern missionary movement, one could hardly do better than to pick up *Mission Legacies* and browse through the essays brought together there. *Mission Legacies* is a collection of 78 biographical sketches, most of them between six to twelve pages in length, of people that decisively shaped the Western missionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These essays had previously appeared in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* over a period of almost twenty years. The biographies are grouped under seven headings: Promoters and Interpreters, Africa, China, Southern Asia, Theologians and Historians, Theorists and Strategists, and Administrators. Many names familiar to those interested in mission history appear in this collection: Thomas

Fowell Buxton, A. J. Gordon, A. T. Pierson, Helen B. Montgomery, John R. Mott, and W. A. Visser 't Hooft among the Promoters and Interpreters; John Philip, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, David Livingstone and Bruno Gutmann in Africa; John Nevius, J. Hudson Taylor, Lottie Moon and T. C. Chao in China; William Carey, Henry Martyn, Ida Scudder, C. F. Andrews, E. Stanley Jones and V. S. Azariah in South Asia; Gustav Warneck, Roland Allen, Kenneth Scott Latourette, Stephen Neill and Joseph Schmidlin among Theologians and Historians; Frank Laubach, Donald McGavran, and Alan R. Tippett among Theorists and Strategists; Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson, Robert E. Speer, J. H. Oldham and Max Warren among Administrators.

Typically each essay begins with an account of the leader's life, proceeds to a discussion of some of the important issues and factors in that life, closes with an assessment of the person's legacy for missions, and is followed by a short selected bibliography. The purpose of each essay is to provide a brief and general sketch of the person's life, work and professional orientation, and a more mature reflection on the legacy of that person in the area of missions.

In general, the essays are very well written, and do not presume background knowledge of the person being discussed. They are therefore admirably suited to the general reader who may be interested in one or more of the mission personalities depicted in the book. On the other hand, the serious student of missions will also be rewarded with concise and interesting perspectives on the leaders of the modern missionary movement. A reader who has studied in depth any of the surveyed mission leaders may well have questions about the choice of life events which have been highlighted or omitted in a particular biography. In this case, the biographies can challenge the scholar to come to her own conclusions regarding the defining moments and the legacy of the leader in question.

While *Mission Legacies* does the world of church history a great favor by introducing important personages in the modern missionary movement, there are two deficiencies in the book which seem to stand out rather conspicuously. The first involves a general lack of critical perspective on each of the leaders and on his or her legacy. While the biographies are not really hagiographic, they sometimes make the reader wonder whether these missionary leaders ever had any serious shortcomings and faults. Their lives are depicted as full of goodness, dedication, wisdom and spirituality, which may very well be true but is hardly the whole story. To the credit of

the writers, conflicts with other Christian workers are often discussed. Important controversies such as those between Hendrik Kraemer and A. G. Hogg over the possibility of faith among non-Christian peoples (pp. 334–35), or between Donald McGavran and his critics over the role of church growth in mission work (pp. 520–1), are at least noted and sometimes explored. Yet too often in the biographies the mission leader being studied emerges in a favorable light from the controversy surrounding him or her.

Similarly, the legacies of the leaders are most often depicted in glowing terms, while the ambiguity of the whole modern missionary movement, so keenly felt especially by modern non-western theologians and church leaders, is almost completely lacking. For example, the legacy of J. Hudson Taylor is described in the following words, most of them from Arthur Glasser: "He was ambitious without being proud... He was biblical without being bigoted... He was Catholic without being superficial... He was charismatic without being selfish.' By all odds, Hudson Taylor was one of the truly great missionaries of the nineteenth century" (p. 202). All too few and far between are legacies which speak of ambiguity, as does Andrew Walls' closing reflections on David Livingstone:

> "It is therefore fair to inquire what was the eventual social legacy to Africa of Livingstone and the missions of his day; and immediately one is conscious of some ambiguity. Undoubtedly he is, on one side, the herald of the coming imperial order. He took British power for granted; he desired that it should be used for moral ends.... Yet equally Livingstone is a pioneer of modern independent Africa. His life and writings show a respect for Africans and African personality unusual at the time, and his confidence never wavered in African capacities and in the common humanity of African and European" (p. 146).

The second limitation of this collection of biographies is in the selection of mission leaders which were chosen. The overwhelming majority of leaders presented in this volume are white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant males. To their credit, the editors acknowledge in their introduction the "underrepresentation of women and of individuals from the Two-Thirds World (six of each)" (p. xviii). I would only add that Roman Catholics are also grossly underrepresented, having only nine biographies, with three of those being condensed into one chapter of eleven pages. Even though France provided the great majority of Roman Catholic missionaries in the

nineteenth century, not a single French Roman Catholic, not even the colorful Cardinal Lavigerie, is represented in this volume.

This being said, I would nonetheless highly recommend this volume to any who are interested not only in mission history but in modern church history as well. In fact, once one knows the limitations of this volume, the profitability of its reading becomes greatly enhanced, since one can balance the presentations with questions and perspectives that are not brought to bear in most of the biographies. And the book becomes a great starting point for further study of the modern missionary movement, which has played a great part in the formation of the world Christianity of today.

— ARUN W. JONES
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Scripture and Discernment: Decision-Making In the Church. By Luke Timothy Johnson. Abingdon Press, 1996, 166 pages.

A most helpful contribution to the issue of the Bible's role in establishing ethical norms comes from the newly revised and substantially expanded work of Luke Johnson, originally published as *Decision Making in the Church: A Biblical Model* (Fortress Press, 1983). He begins by giving a sociological analysis of how groups make decisions. Groups by their very nature have little toleration for diversity. When that toleration has been pushed to its limit, groups are compelled to make decisions. As Johnson explains, group decisions fall into two categories: *identity* decisions (who are we?) and *task* decisions (what ought we to do?). Groups tend to favor one of these types of decisions and are therefore prone to have trouble with the other. Both the *process* by which the group makes a decision (which may be camouflaged from full view) and the *qualifications* for participating in that process are points at which the nature of a given group is most fully disclosed.

On the whole, groups tend to be conservative. Johnson points out that because of the energy involved in changing either the identity or tasks of a groups, they tend to follow the path of least resistance when pressed into decision-making. The seven deadly words that every pastor dreads to hear, but nonetheless encounters regularly, "We have always done it that way,"

are the *sine qua non* of group resistance to change. Nevertheless, when forced, a group will decide. Before it can adequately do this, however, it must come to terms with what the challenge is that lies before it and how this challenge affects its members' previous understanding of themselves, as well as how it will shape a new self-understanding. Decision-making, then, in Johnson's view is fundamentally a process of *interpretation* as the group attempts to make sense of where it came from, where it is, and where it is going.

Most groups have some sort of previously identified constitution or charter which sets forth a group's self-understanding at its founding and remains widely understood as normative. However, the content and extent of such normativity, Johnson asserts, is often actively contested within the group. Some will want to adhere to the old understanding, others will want to see the old charter in a new light. How much weight a group gives to the old tradition and how much weight it gives to current experience will tip its decision in one direction or the other.

Obviously the group in question for the purposes of Johnson's discussion is the church.Though he is a former monk, when Johnson speaks of church he has in mind no monolith whose headquarters is on the other side of the planet, but rather individual, localized bodies of believers who know each other and the tradition well enough to engage adequately in an intentional process of *discernment*: "If the church does not first live at this local level, it does not live at all" (p. 22). This process is necessary, Johnson asserts, because "God did not stop speaking when the prophets died" (p. 24). But it is also necessary because God's elusive Word, forever incapable of being fully grasped, comes to people in the concrete particularities of daily existence, such that if the Word is to be heard, it must be heard out of these circumstances, in a given place, at a given time, by specific persons. The church is called to listen to that Word when it comes and bear witness to it, not in any individual sense but as the church, that is, as the gathered community informed by the tradition. The wisdom of theological experts only has validity insofar as the same work that is revealed to them in dogmatic formulations is also being wrought in the lives of the faithful. Johnson calls this discernment of the "practical life" of the Christian the "cutting edge of Christian theology" (p. 27). The Word of God is ever unfolding before us and there is no sense in which we have ever arrived. Our faith must be ever attentive, Johnson warns, if we are truly to be the church we were called to be. This does not mean a willy-nilly rush

to dump the tradition. But as Johnson says, "The real business of tradition is not the securing of the past, but the ensuring of the future" (p. 29).

Johnson then turns his considerable exegetical skills toward reading scripture for the very purpose of demonstrating what he has just claimed, namely that the ongoing process of discernment is necessary for the continuing life of the gathered community. He examines the book of Acts as a model for the sort of process he is advocating. Throughout Acts the disciples recognize that what God had spoken to them in the past is insufficient in the face of the present need. They therefore seek God's guidance for the new situation and act accordingly. They listen to stories from outsiders about the work that God is doing in their lives. Next, they listen carefully to what God is saying to each of them. Many of them bear witness that indeed God is doing a new thing. Finally they listen to opposing parties who question the legitimacy of such novel moves. Only after they have accomplished this burdensome, disputatious work do they decide. Moreover, Johnson points out that the text shows no embarrassment at the intensity or fierceness of the debate, but instead allows all parties frankly to speak their side of the issue. Johnson argues that the same model for discerning the direction of God's will ought to occur in each and every gathered community in existence today.

Finally, Johnson closes the book with some practical suggestions for engaging in the theological reflection so necessary for discernment. His first suggestion is that preaching be re-envisioned as a conversation between pastor and congregation over matters of common experience in the community. Rather than teaching, offering pithy anecdotes, or even expounding scripture, the pastor should speak what he or she has heard from the Lord in and through the community's situation. This requires prayerful attentiveness to both the witness of scripture and the experiences of the people. On this view pastoral care and visitation become more than just a ministry of friendship but rather the essential work of the preaching task itself. Secondly, Johnson recommends the formation of small groups within the church that gather not just to study the scripture but also to listen to the personal faith narratives of other persons as well.

In addition to his introductory remarks on the sociology of knowledge within groups, which by itself would have made the book worthwhile, I believe that Johnson presents a faithful model for continuing ethical reflection, largely because it operates from the laity up rather than from the clergy down. He has also taken into account the church's ongoing need to

renew itself continually day by day rather than to subsist on old idols in its theological life. Furthermore, he has made his case from a close reading of scripture which is seen it as illuminating our current circumstances, rather than as a repository of timeless doctrinal truths.

— TIMOTHY FREDERICK SIMPSON
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A Christian Theology of Religions. By John Hick. Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press. 1995, x + 160 pages.

The question of how Christians are to make theological sense of other religions is not a new question. It is as old as the Church itself. It has, however, achieved a singular priority in theological and missiological debates since the emergence of the sciences of comparative religion, sociology and anthropology in the nineteenth century, and has asserted itself with even greater urgency in the nearly sixty years that have passed since the Tambaram Conference on World Missions. It was there in 1938 that the exclusivist evangelical paradigm formulated by Karl Barth and championed most forcefully by Hendrik Kraemer won the day. Barth and Kraemer condemned all religion as "unbelief," and further claimed that Christianity alone contains God's revealed truth in Jesus Christ.

Two major positions have evolved as rivals of the Barth-Kraemer model. Inclusivism, typified by the post-Vatican II Catholic model and best elucidated by Karl Rahner, sees faithful followers of other ways as "anonymous Christians." The pluralistic model, represented by, among others, John Hick, views non-Christian religions in and of themselves as avenues of human salvation that are as valid and efficacious as Christianity.

Hick has in recent years been one of pluralism's most prolific and boldest advocates, likening his theological project to a call for the equivalent of a "copernican revolution" in our understanding of ourselves and others in the "universe of faiths." In *Christianity and Other Faiths*, which he edited with Brian Hebblethwaite, Hick writes:

> Copernicus realized that it is the sun, and not the earth, that is at the centre, and that all the heavenly bodies, including our own earth, re-

> volve around it. And we have to realize that the universe of faiths centres upon God, and not upon Christianity, or upon any other religion. He is the sun, the originative source of light and life, whom all the religions reflect in their own different ways (1980:182).

In his newest book, *A Christian Theology of Religions*, Hick lays out once again his proposal for religious pluralism. In this book, an adaptation of his 1994 Auburn Lectures, given at Union Theological Seminary in New York, Hick adopts a self-consciously non-academic, often breezy tone as he conjures a series of imaginary "dialogues" which enable him to put forth his own theory at the same time that he is responding to his critics.

Hick creates two fictitious discussants, "Phil" and "Grace," who represent the criticisms of his pluralist model from philosophy on the one hand and traditional Christianity on the other. He allows each to direct pointed questions and criticisms of his theory to him. Hick takes the criticisms from both camps seriously and strives to give both them and himself a fair hearing, thereby modeling a style of dialogical search for truth which is too rarely found in academia.

Hick's Introduction, entitled "On Theological Controversy," reads like a brief filed in behalf of the defense. In it he complains that his critics, intentionally or not, have misrepresented his positions in various ways in order to attack him. Chapter One rehearses the author's pluralist proposal, in which he finds interreligious common ground in the experience of "salvation/liberation" which, he asserts, is the *sine qua non* of all the world's great religions. We participate in this experience, according to Hick, when we

> transcend the ego point of view, which is the source of all selfishness, greed, exploitation, cruelty, and injustice, and become re-centred in that ultimate mystery for which we, in our Christian language, use the term God (p. 17).

All of the great religious traditions, Hick claims, can be conduits of this liberative experience. They are all manifestations of human beings' culturally and experientially conditioned responses to what Hick postulates as the Real *an sich*, which he sets in contradistinction to "the Real as humanly perceived in different ways as a range of divine phenomena" (p. 29).

Chapters Two, Three, Four, and Five constitute the heart of the debate, and of the book. Two chapters each are devoted to articulating and answer-

ing the queries and counterclaims posed by, respectively, Hick's (primarily post-modernist) philosophical and (primarily dogmatic conservative) theological detractors. In the final chapter, entitled, "A Christianity That Sees Itself as One True Religion Among Many," Hick notes that the history of the Church has been a history of eruptions and transformations in theology, belief, and practice. The meanings, Hick argues, with which Christians have invested such central and abiding symbols of the faith as the Cross, the Trinity, the Body and Blood have evolved and have been re-examined constantly over the centuries. Forms of Christian worship and practice have, moreover, been newly contextualized in every culture and age in which they have been espoused. Hick asks, therefore, quite reasonably, whether there could not be

> a form of Christianity which reveres Jesus as its supreme teacher and inspirer but does not regard him as literally God incarnate; which seeks to nurture men and women from self-centredness towards a new centring in God, thus promoting not only individual but also social and national and international unselfishness; and that sees itself as one major spiritual path among others, developing friendly and co-operative relations with those others? (p. 126)

Before ending this concluding chapter with a brief selection of texts from the great world religions in which he finds the raw materials of "salvation/liberation," Hick affords the reader a fantastical glimpse on the global religious landscape as it might look in the year 2056 CE. While some may find his vision overly sanguine, even naively idealistic, most will agree that as prophet Hick imagines an eschaton worth putting off nirvana to work towards and participate in.

— JAMES THOMAS
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community. By Craig R. Koester. Fortress Press, 1995, xii + 300 pages.

"We have as yet no adequate monograph on the Johannine symbolism as such," laments Wayne A. Meeks. "Attempts to solve the Johannine puzzle have almost totally ignored the question of what *social* function the myths

may have had" ("The Man From Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 [1972]: 47, 49). "What is needed," adds R. Alan Culpepper, "is a treatment of John's symbolism that: (1) is based on adequate definitions, (2) is sensitive to movement and development in the gospel, (3) relates the metaphors, symbols, and motifs to one another, and (4) analyzes their function within the gospel as a literary whole" (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 188–89).

In response, Craig R. Koester offers *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*. Koester addresses seminary students and pastors as well as scholars, making his exposition easy to follow and relegating technicalities to the footnotes. He thus provides an important resource for teachers and preachers, along with an adequate answer to the pleas of scholars like Meeks and Culpepper.

Following Culpepper's recommendation, Koester begins with definitions. "A symbol," he writes, "is an image, an action, or a person that is understood to have transcendent significance" (p. 4). He narrows the field by excluding abstract symbols like life and truth from his investigation. To this basic definition Koester adds the helpful distinction between core symbols and supporting symbols. He also differentiates symbols from metaphors and motifs. This gives him a framework for fulfilling Culpepper's third criterion of relating different figures of speech to one another—a task that he performs with only limited success, as we shall see.

He concludes the introductory chapter by discussing the operation, recognition, and interpretation of symbols. According to Koester, our understanding of John's symbols ought to agree with that of the original audience, which included Jews, Samaritans, and Greeks. Attention to the understanding of the original audience in succeeding chapters, however, involves him in speculative reconstructions and tedious exposition. On the other hand, his accurate observation about the christological nature of Johannine symbolism and its implications for discipleship allows for valuable insights as to how the gospel's symbols illuminate its theology. By reiterating this point in each chapter, Koester effectively relates Johannine symbolism to a "gospel [that] repeatedly compels readers to come to terms with the reality of God in the person of Jesus and to understand the meaning of their own lives in relation to him" (p. 15).

Koester next turns to two major types of symbols: symbolic and representative figures and symbolic actions (including signs). Critics consis-

tently recognize symbolism in John's signs and actions. In ascribing symbolic significance to John's characters, however, Koester joins a mere handful of scholars (including Culpepper and Raymond F. Collins). Most twentieth-century critics tend to regard John's characters as historical figures or literary creations. According to Koester, however, this constitutes only the first aspect of their three-fold significance. John's individuals can also represent a group of people, and typify a particular response to Jesus.

Koester patterns his discussion of representative figures according to this three-level paradigm. He fails, however, to specify that only the second level (where individual characters represent a group) can be considered strictly symbolic. The first level is purely descriptive; the third is based on reader involvement in a given character's experiences. An explicit distinction between these functions might have lent more clarity to an otherwise interesting exposition.

Chapters 4–6 are devoted to specific core symbols: light and darkness, water, and the crucifixion. Koester regards the crucifixion as a core symbol due to its pervasiveness in the narrative as well as its galaxy of supporting symbols, such as the dying seed, the Cana miracle, the temple cleansing, and the foot washing. He insightfully delineates the meaning of the cross for christology and for discipleship. Again, however, he makes no explicit distinction between symbolism and other figures of speech. For example, does Jesus' mock coronation in John 19:2 constitute a supporting symbol, or a supporting irony? Koester does not specify. Consequently, his discussion lacks some clarity.

The final chapter addresses Meeks's concern: how did the gospel's symbols reflect and shape its community? Here Koester effectively integrates his interpretation of John's symbols with the community's apparent understanding of Christ and of themselves in relationship to Christ and to the world. First, he shows how symbols like the flock and the crucifixion reinforce the believing community's unity with Christ and with one another. Second, he discusses symbols like the foot washing, the vine, and the dying seed. These illustrate aspects of discipleship such as love, friendship, and honor. Finally, he turns to light and darkness, the paradigmatic faith responses of representative figures, and the door—all symbols depicting the community's distinction from and witness to the world.

Interpreting a gospel's figures of speech is a risky business. Symbolism in particular depends on referents common to a first-century author and audience, yet debated by twentieth-century exegetes. The debate in-

tensifies according to the theological issues at stake. For those willing to take a chance, however, the potential reward is well worth the risk. A text's implicit commentary is always twice as interesting as, and ten times more exciting than, its direct statements. Scholars, students, and pastors alike can thus be grateful for Craig Koester's careful and balanced treatment of Johannine symbolism.

— JOCELYN MCWHIRTER
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Grammar of Akkadian. By John Huehnergard. Harvard Semitic Museum Studies 45. Scholars Press, 1997, xl + 647 pages.

John Huehnergard's new grammar is more than an annotated catalogue of the intricacies of the Akkadian language. It serves as a worthy introduction to the whole study of Assyriology. Throughout the work, the author explains the fundamentals of the language with clarity and focus, while at the same time writing in a way that enables beginning students to find their way into this unique discipline.

In the introduction, Huehnergard provides basic information about the nature of Akkadian in its different forms, and indicates the most helpful reference tools. He then proceeds through thirty-eight lessons to present the elements of Old Babylonian (OB) grammar and writing. After a brief discussion of Akkadian syllables and nouns, lessons three through twenty-one primarily present the G verbal system. They work through the paradigms for the infinitive, preterite and verbal adjective, then handle separately the durative, imperative, perfect, and participle. Notably, the author introduces the weak verbs in association with each verbal paradigm, which gives the student a good grasp of the many different ways that a verb may appear. In this section, Huehnergard also includes topical discussions about logograms, determinatives, Old Babylonian contracts, and the laws of Hammurapi. The result is that after twenty-one lessons (perhaps just over one semester), the student should have a strong grasp of the basic grammatical structures of Akkadian, as well as of the various ways that verbs may appear, at least in the G. With this foundational background established, the book then presents the other verbal systems along with

information about letters, royal inscriptions, hymns, prayers, oaths, myths, and epics.

Each lesson covers two or three grammatical points, introduces ten to fifteen vocabulary items, and beginning in lesson nine, teaches ten cuneiform signs. Each sign is given in its different forms: OB lapidary, OB cursive, and Neo-Assyrian. The signs are all complied in an appended list, which serves as a handy reference. The exercises are varied and interesting. They begin each time with a few phrases to translate *into* Akkadian, which promotes a more active comprehension of the grammar and writing system. Beginning in lesson thirteen, the student normalizes and translates sections from actual OB texts. The exercises cover a broad range of textual material, including Hammurapi laws, Mari letters, royal inscriptions, and hymns.

The book presents each grammatical point thoroughly, and each lesson is followed by a generous selection of exercises. The result is that the book is quite long, but the size of the book should not hinder one's efforts to use it in the classroom. The grammatical explanations are not burdened by unnecessary details so the lessons would work well in the classroom. Furthermore, there are a great number of pages devoted to exercises, only a selection of which could actually be completed in an assignment. The result is that the book is concise enough for classroom use, yet can remain a reference work for later study.

Throughout the book, Huehnergard explains difficult concepts with patience and insight. He refrains from using antiquated Latin terms or other confusing terminology. Also, each lesson is filled with lucid examples and clear paradigms. One example is his helpful presentation of genitive constructions and "bound forms" in lesson 8. In a methodical way, he shows how the loss of case endings affects different kinds of nouns. He summarizes this information in a convenient table that would be a helpful reference even for advanced students. Furthermore, in each vocabulary entry he indicates the bound form, which reinforces the student's familiarity with the concept. This is an excellent treatment of something that could otherwise be a confusing distinction for beginning students.

Another helpful feature of this book is the 140 pages worth of appendices. Huehnergard includes a concise glossary of Akkadian words, a corresponding English-Akkadian word list, and lists of logograms, determinatives, and other signs. Additionally, there are sections detailing date formulas, weights and measures, and the difference between

Babylonian and Assyrian dialects. Finally, the 27 pages worth of paradigms that cover nouns, adjectives, and the verbal system are comprehensive and easy to use.

This book is an excellent introduction to the practice of translating OB Akkadian texts. It includes many features that will assist students beginning in this discipline. There are some things, however, that this book is not. Because the exercises contain many annotations that help students with unfamiliar terms and constructions, it does not encourage the use of critical tools such as the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*. The exercises often do not reveal the true complexity of reading the signs, comparing variant texts, and puzzling out confusing grammatical constructions. This is not to say that this textbook could not be a valuable part of a rigorous language program. However, more instruction would be required in using reference works and critical editions of texts.

This is an important point even for courses that do not intend to produce Assyriologists. For scholars interested primarily in the biblical texts, the study of Akkadian can help one formulate linguistic and historical arguments. Many people, in fact, draw upon Akkadian parallels in their exegesis of Hebrew texts. However, not all of these arguments have sufficient textual backing. A reader with a casual acquaintance with Akkadian will often not be able to uncover the assumptions and weaknesses of such an argument. Therefore, the ability to evaluate linguistic and historical arguments often depends on one's competency in dealing with variant texts, critical editions, and reference tools. Although Huehnergard's grammar presents the language in a thorough way, the class instructor will need to provide direct guidance on how to use the available scholarly critical *apparati*. Students should have the competency and confidence to evaluate the translations and interpretations of earlier scholars, as well as to prepare their own treatment of texts. Advanced knowledge of the various methods and tools for such study enables one to engage in these discussions. Although it does not provide the means for this by itself, Huehnergard's *A Grammar of Akkadian* can be an important first step in that process.

— BRYAN D. BIBB
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy. By Mercy Amba Oduyoye. Orbis Books, 1995, ix + 229 pages.

For generations African men have ignored the silent plea of women to be treated with justice. As far as they are concerned, once their women have been fed and clothed they have nothing to complain about. The international decade of women did not even dent traditional modes of thinking about women. European and American feminist concepts were just brushed aside even by educated African men. For those, especially Africans, who think that recent trends in feminism are Western intrusions on African traditional values and must therefore be shunned by all well meaning Africans, Mercy Oduyoye's *Daughters of Anowa* puts to rest such reasoning. Oduyoye writes from the perspective of an African Christian woman brought up in the Akan matrilineal system, but who has experienced the patrilineal patriarchy of the Yoruba of Nigeria, not to mention the British-style patriarchy which shows itself in the Westernized sectors of African community. Her arguments cut through the resistance of African patriarchy to change. As a proverb she points out goes, "When you go near a river, that is when you can hear a crab cough" (p. 78). This book is an attempt to bring the river to those who have refused to get close enough to hear.

Written as a movement in three parts, the first cycle probes the way in which language in the form of proverbs, folk tales, and myths—what Oduyoye calls folktalk—hitherto used to subvert women, can be employed to overturn traditionally harmful modes of thinking about women. Selecting proverbs that refer to women and other female creatures in a way that prescribes "what woman is," Oduyoye compares them with other parallel proverbs that apply exclusively to men. The disparity, always in favor of male superiority, sticks out like a sore thumb. The only time a folktalk favors woman is when she is cast in the role of mother. For instance, the Akan say, "Like hens, women wait for cocks to crow, announcing the arrival of daylight" (p. 61) or " When a woman makes a giant drum, it is kept in a man's room" (p. 61). Again, "If a tall woman carries palmnuts, birds eat them off her head" (p. 61). At the same time, "Mother is golden" is a common name men give to their daughters. A woman's sense of being is thus closely bound to marriage and childbearing, which serves to marginalize her further.

Myths in which mishaps befall women who step out of their culturally assigned roles abound. As with other folktalk, the import of these myths

is clear: In male-female relationships, males have preeminence. The reason becomes apparent when one looks at culturally assigned roles. Any woman stepping out of line is a shame and a disgrace to womanhood, and only misfortune, especially lack of a spouse, will follow her. All wise mothers should therefore take heed to bring up their daughters to know their culturally acceptable position *vis-à-vis* men. At whatever cost to women, they must be seen and not heard, neither must they project themselves as being as capable as men. Oduyoye's hope is that these proverbs, myths, and folk tales will be rewoven to form a beautiful tapestry representing the equal value of men and women.

Essays in the second cycle look at culture through religion and marriage to ascertain what "practices are genuinely traditional and to what extent they correspond to our sense of justice and fair play" (p. 84). She adroitly avoids the pitfalls of her African counterparts who spend time refuting writings by Western feminists, especially those who erroneously assume that African women experience the obverse of all Western women are to achieve. While calling women to resist behavior that fosters a pattern of injustice from men, she understands the need for compromise for some. The need to be adaptable and thus survive is paramount to the African woman. So while some may frown on her for serving her husband food in the dining room and eating in the kitchen, she knows that for the moment this provides rest for her. In her estimation, education has not bettered the lot of women; on the contrary, it has doubled their workload. Women find that they are expected to do both their self-assigned jobs as well as play their culturally assigned roles. In fact, colonial intrusion has not only helped to double the load of the African woman, but it has also robbed her of her voice in various fields of life. Politically, the traditional place of the *ohemma*, the queenmother and official king maker of the Ashanti, was completely ignored by the British government. This action paved the way for the loss of women's voices from the political scenes. Yet the resilience of these women is seen in the important role they play behind the scene. As every political leader has to learn, the market women can make or mar a politician's career. And many a president has learned this only after he has been toppled.

In the final cycle on dreams Oduyoye calls the traditional and modern social structures of power to account, and offers suggestions for redressing the unjust treatment of women. She questions the "the mold in which religion has cast women, the psychological binds of socioeconomic realties that

hold us in place, our political powerlessness, and the daily diminution of our domestic influence by Western-type patriarchal norms" (p. 157). Her strongest censure is against the church, and she labels as myth the often heard saying that the church has brought liberation to African women. This is only partially true, especially since right-wing Christian fundamentalism with its literal interpretation of scripture takes away what little freedom is given. (This reviewer believes this point is debatable). To be sure, the churches have taken up issues of color and economics in their bid to follow the liberating power of the gospel, but they have completely ignored the issue of gender. Calling these institutions to account also mandates that women no longer grin and bear it all, and term the injustice they experience "a woman's lot."

These studies of proverbs, folk tales and myths have uncovered neglected or glossed over dimensions of gendered socialization in Africa, and challenged traditional assumptions and conclusions drawn from these premises. This book is a call for Africans, and especially African theologians, to be the voice of God for God's people as a whole. It is a call to stop telling man's stories, *anansesem,* and begin to tell God's stories, *Nyankosem.*

This balanced yet bold book makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the African woman's pre- and post-colonial status and thus provides a framework for working towards justice for womanhood and for all. It might be of interest to the historian of religions, in particular those in missions and ecumenics who are interested in the interplay between African religions and traditional Christianity. The student of comparative literature will also find valuable information in this wealth of proverbs, myths and folk tales.

— ESTHER E. ACOLATSE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Judgement and Grace In Dixie: Southern Faiths from Faulkner to Elvis. By Charles Reagan Wilson. The University of Georgia Press, 1995, xxi + 202 pages.

Profound preoccupation with the Protestant religion is an inescapable aspect of Southern culture. Similar to other cultural or regional spiritualities, Southern evangelical religion is shaped by particular social conditions,

cultural contexts and historical circumstances. Like his earlier work, *Baptized in the Blood*, Charles Reagan Wilson's collection of essays, *Judgement and Grace in Dixie,* explores the theme of popular religion in the formation of a regional self-consciousness in the South. Wilson takes the reader behind the cultural interstices, in which old symbols are retrieved and recast to form intersections with new cultural productions. For Wilson, popular religion is the manner by which religious phenomena interface with secular practices and give distinct shape to a culture, people or nation. These religious phenomena are often embodied within ecclesiastical structures yet transmitted into the secular arena through popular channels to create distinct worldviews, sets of beliefs and cultural practices that sustain the life of everyday people.

The twelve essays in the book are divided into three sections. Part One explores civil religion as a species of popular religion in which Protestant practices and vocabularies interface with secular symbols and systems to imbue the history, identity and destiny of a people with religious significance. The civil religion of a people or region can be understood as a marriage between religious sensibilities and patriotic sentiments. These sacred and secular images serve both to refine and reform the social order in which they exist. Chapter One, "The Southern Religious Culture: Distinctiveness and Social Change," reveals the chief features of Southern Protestantism: its evangelical expressivity, its pronounced moralism, and its unabashed fundamentalism. Chapter Two, "God's Project: The Southern Civil Religion, 1920–1980," shows how the spirit of the "Lost Cause," the dominant social myth of the late nineteenth century, has given way in the contemporary era to a more race-inclusive vision that draws both from the Confederate experience and the Civil Rights Movement and, further, how these key events have shaped Southern self-perception and cultural identity. Chapter Three, "The Death of Bear Bryant: Myth and Ritual in The Modern South," construes the funeral of Bear Bryant as a major historic event that reconciled a variegated range of cultural, economic and religious communities around a singular historic personage.

Part Two focuses on the myriad ways in which religious sentiments and sensibilities inform Southern creative culture. Wilson examines the religious significance of such cultural heroes as Martin Luther King Jr., Bear Bryant, and William Faulkner, and illumines the ways in which their religious backgrounds helped set the stage for their respective public personalities. In his essay entitled, "William Faulkner and The Southern Religious

Culture," Wilson reviews and revises interpretations of Faulkner's attitude toward religion. He contends that most Faulknerian scholarship comes short of grasping the complexity of his literary vision, the depths of his talents, and the breadth of his moral imagination that fed his sensitivity to the racial complexities and economic ambiguities that characterized that region. Chapter Five, "Southern and Visionary Art," examines the work of folklorists as products of certain religious, cultural and class backgrounds. It also highlights the Pentecostal imprimatur on Southern art. Chapter Six, "Digging up Bones," explores the pervasive theme of death in country music. It focuses on the creative ways in which folk peoples have coped with disease, devastation, dread, and death. In Chapter Seven, "The Tortuous Search for Books," Wilson examines the process by which Southerners have come to appreciate a book culture and is hopeful that this culture will aid the process of social regeneration.

Part Three, "Icons and Spaces," contains acute observations of public images and spaces that carry religious significance for Southerners. It illumines the sophisticated fusion of religious and secular phenomena in public life. Chapter Eight, "The Iconography of Elvis," looks at Elvis Presley as a heroic figure for mid-century white Southerners trying to cope with monumental cultural changes such as the Second World War, rapid industrialization, and the Civil Rights Movements. Chapter Nine, "Sunday at the First Baptist Church," describes a visit to Dallas First Baptist Church and its relevance to the predominantly middle-class white community it serves. Chapter Ten, "The Cult of Beauty," shows the deep appreciation that Southerners have for beauty and how this appreciation shows up in highly publicized and celebrated beauty pageants. Chapter Eleven, "Unifying the symbols of Southern Culture," is an attempt to identify the popular racial and cultural symbols in the South, and suggests creative ways in which they can be used for the reconstruction of civil society. Chapter Twelve, "Sacred Southern Space," focuses on the relationship between the rural folk religion and more modern African American religious practices.

This book is noteworthy for several reasons. The broad range of Wilson's cultural interests and his rich theoretical insights highlight the need for the creation of discursive and dialogic space in which ideas, visions, and languages can be contested, criticized and confirmed. Indeed, Wilson's work can be read as an attempt to begin such conversation. His vision of a biracial South in part informs his quest to recover and refine social myths, traditional images, and cultural symbols which will undergird

the cultural and ethnic unity of the region. Second, Wilson's profound commentary on the central and creative role of religion in the formation of a Southern cultural identity reveals the degree to which evangelical Protestantism remains a vital element in the shaping of the collective self-definition of the American people. Third, Wilson's work is interdisciplinary. He skillfully combines social scientific analysis with historiographical research and a nuanced sensitivity to Southern folk traditions.

Wilson's vision for a regional cultural unity is both profound and problematic. It is profound because unlike many contemporary efforts to foster racial unity, ethnic solidarity and gender equality, Wilson acknowledges the inescapable role of tradition. However, it is problematic because his claim that both Confederate and Civil Rights symbols should be used to affirm a vision for a biracial south is put forth without an adequate intellectual defense. The increasing religious plurality in the South requires the development of a flexible yet responsible vision for social reconstruction, one that draws from the past, yet is mindful of the contradictions born out of this past. Moreover, cultural perspectives, philosophical orientations and religious viewpoints ignored or silenced in the past must be resurrected for the cultivation of this much needed social vision—one that is morally defensible, culturally sophisticated, and historically sensitive.

The question at stake is whether a biracial coalition is comprehensive enough to address the complex needs and concerns of a broad consensus. How do the concerns of Spanish-speaking Americans, Asians, and women fit into the equation? Second, given the white-supremacist content of Confederate language and logic, how are we to justify the utilization of such symbols as cultural and moral pillars upon which to build a harmonious southern community? Tradition can be a suffocating or a liberating affair, depending on which traditions are being retrieved, reinvented and reinforced. Much of the Confederate memorialization invokes deep feelings of racial torment and political oppression as well as existential angst for African, Jewish, Spanish-speaking and Native Americans. Given the presence of a viable popular religion in the South, how do we develop a credible moral-philosophical framework to criticize and confirm which symbols, ideas, metaphors and images will be acceptable in the public domain—elements that will nourish a pluralistic community? Without such a transcendent framework it will be difficult to develop a democratic, transracial, pluralistic Southern community.

Finally, this reviewer maintains reservations about the credibility of resuscitating a regional consciousness under a rapidly changing South. Increased mobility under conditions of economic expansion, technological specialization and geographic urbanization, challenge traditional identities and induce cultural hybridity and fluidity. On one level, economic and scientific power is being increasingly concentrated in urban areas. Hence cities such as Atlanta, Miami, Dallas and Charlotte become the new loci of identity. On the other hand, the power of multinational corporations forge global relations that undermine conventional sensibilities. In a global, supra-scientific, hi-tech era, regional identities and unities become harder to negotiate.

Charles Wilson's work is on the whole highly accessible, well-informed, and refreshing. It touches on a wide variety of subjects and disciplines and as such will be appreciated by popular readers, theologians, social ethicists, cultural anthropologists, folklorists, sociologists, and historians of religion, as well as those in Southern, African-American and American Studies departments. Moreover, it can be read as a survey of recent Southern cultural history, an attempt to bring to light crucial areas of Southern life that have been ignored in recent academic work. Yet the most noteworthy aspect of this work is its egalitarian sensibility. Wilson's social and cultural analysis constitutes an honest effort to look at the world through the eyes of the liminal and marginal members of society. In particular, his examination of various folk-religious practices and lifestyles shows how religion is used by ordinary blacks and whites as a resource to cope with the vagaries of everyday life, an instrument of protest through creative expression, and an impetus to personal wholeness, communal advancement and social amelioration.

— TOKUNBO AYODELE ADELEKAN
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes. By Robert A. Orsi. Yale University Press, 1997, xxi + 303 pages including Notes, Bibliography, and Index.

In a hamlet straggling along the East bank of the upper Hudson river, a tiny Catholic Church serves a population that has been dwindling since mid-

century. In the late 1980's, the few remaining parishioners found to their dismay that they had to travel three miles to a bigger suburban parish for the weekly Mass, as the new priest, with diocesan support, stopped celebrating at the dilapidated little church. Much as the diocese might have wished to close it down entirely, that proved impossible—the insignificant spot was famous throughout the area, not under its officially sanctioned name, but as "St. Jude's Shrine." Two or three times a year the little parking lot overflowed and the sanctuary hummed with the prayers of those making their Novena to St. Jude, the patron saint of lost causes, the majority of them—though by no means all—elderly women of working-class, immigrant backgrounds; Irish, Polish, German and Italian. This reviewer's neighbor, Loretta (the name has been changed), a scrawny, bright-eyed woman of almost eighty, brimming with energy, outrage, and stories of faith's triumph over disaster, spent countless hours filling tiny bottles with holy water and holy oil, addressing innumerable letters in her shaky handwriting, and chain-smoking unfiltered Camel cigarettes as she worked untiringly to keep the devotion to St. Jude alive.

Loretta's world of prayer, devotion, and female grit in the midst of pain, hopelessness, and intransigent male bureaucracy, is brought to magnificent life and sympathetic analysis by Robert Orsi in *Thank You, St. Jude.* Her semi-rural situation and her little local shrine differ in many respects from the urban devotional community centered around the National Shrine of St. Jude in Chicago which Orsi and his interlocutors describe so fully. One of the strengths of this work, which differentiates it from the author's earlier *tour de force* in the social history of twentieth-century American Catholicism, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950* (Yale University Press, 1989), is that the community he describes, while having a base in a particular geographic location, reaches out from any local limitations into a study of a more general, national phenomenon. *Thank You, St. Jude* for the most part succeeds brilliantly at its project: to provide nothing less than a chapter in the social history of prayer. Prayer is a religious activity which, though central to most faiths, has received little attention from historians apart from those interested in the sub-field known as "the history of worship." In *Thank You, St Jude* prayer finds a persuasive advocate as a legitimate focus of study by social historians of religion, for, as Orsi points out late in this work, prayer "is always situated in specific and discrepant environments of so-

cial power, and it derives its meanings, implications, and consequences in relation to these configurations" (p. 186).

Orsi's previous study of the cult and festivals of the Madonna of Mount Carmel and her church in Italian Harlem from the 1880's into the 1950's paved the way for this project. Along with Jay Dolan and other historians of the Catholic experience in the U.S., Orsi questioned an earlier Catholic historiography which emphasized institutional developments and the Americanization of immigrant religious experience. His insistence on detailing the cultural and social identity of the immigrants, preserved in part by the way they lived out their faith, provided a moving contribution to the development of ethnic studies in religion. Orsi's analysis of the power of the *domus* (the domestic system of the Italian immigrant home and family) and the leadership role of the women, both within the *domus* and in the public street festivals of the Madonna, while not the central focus of the earlier work, laid the groundwork for *Thank You St. Jude*, where gender issues take center stage. In the earlier work, Orsi showed a flair for writing religious history "from the bottom up" and for exploring communities of faith by way of an anthropologically inspired "thick description": these methodologies also receive further development and sensitive application in *Thank You, St. Jude.* This work, however, uses these methodologies to ask more interesting and more widely-reaching questions than the earlier work, useful though that work remains to historians of religion in the United States. *Thank You, St. Jude*, raises questions for students of world religions, women's studies, cultural and ethnic studies, theology, philosophy, psychology, and the biblical texts, and, indeed, for all people who pray. How has prayer revealed and constructed praying peoples? How has prayer affected the world?

Chapter One, "From South Chicago to Heaven," describes in a straightforward narrative the making of the National Shrine of St. Jude and the origins of the devotion in the moment of the 1929 economic crash and the subsequent years of the Depression. St. Jude was a new saint to North America, brought by the personal devotion of a Claretian father who had encountered the cult while in Chile, and transferred it as part of his personal spiritual discipline to his work in the Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission among Mexican immigrants to Chicago in the 1920's. In Chile, St. Jude had been known as the patron saint of prostitutes and of hopeless causes. In Chicago, women from other ethnic neighborhoods beyond the Mexican community of the church that housed the shrine, discovered Jude

as a friend in the difficult days of the late 1920's (the Mexicans called St. Jude *el santo blanco* and generally ignored him, pp. 23–24). St Jude's first Novena in October 1929 drew a thousand people to the street outside the church, much to the amazement of the Claretian fathers of the Mission. The magazine, *The Voice of St. Jude* (1935), and its successor, *St. Jude's Journal* (1963), spread the fame of the new devotion around the nation, and provided Orsi with one strand of his "interlocking sources" (p. xiv). The other strands are the larger culture of popular Catholic publishing which form the context of the St. Jude publications, and, most importantly, Orsi's conversations with women devotees of the cult, conversations (as distinguished from interviews, p. xiv) held during the late 1980's.

From these sources, Orsi has constructed the body of the work, presenting the content of women's prayers to Saint Jude in the context of immigrant life in Depression America, the women's "hopeless causes and things despaired of" (Chapter Two). Chapter Three investigates the image presented to these women through the Catholic popular press of their role and function as female adherents of the faith, and the "family romance" in which they were invited to participate (pp. 78, 85), but which conflicted with their grimmer reality (pp. 91–94). There follows a history of the image of St. Jude himself, as received and then reconstructed by his women devotees, resurrecting him from his marginalized position as "the Obscure" and "the Voiceless and Inarticulate, the Speechless and Silent Saint," to his "incarnation as a modern American hero" (pp. 99–100), who, with his "manly good looks" (p. 107), could be an inexhaustible source of good things, mended relationships, cured pains and loyal friendship. In this act of constructing their saint, the women of the study found that, "desperate need could become the source of strength, and surrender could become a move toward personal agency" (p. 118). Chapter Five tells the story of the women devotees' dialogue with each other in a network of support and storytelling, in "*narratives of petition, narratives of grace*" (pp. 122–23), while the following chapter studies the miracles of healing from a position of an analysis of the meaning of suffering in American Catholic culture, rather than a pseudo-scientific "explanation" of healing phenomena. This is perhaps one of the most provocative chapters in the book as it describes the female devotees of St. Jude as women who "shaped communities of attentive caring women inside the male spaces of the hospital," (p. 181) and who "when American medicine was pulling body and soul apart, [...] found a way of reintegrating them in an anticipation of holistic heal-

ing" (p. 184). A final chapter provides the beginning of the analysis of this mass of description and narrative.

If the work can be faulted, it is for the limited scope of this analysis. The material Orsi so lovingly assembles cries out for comparison with the records of other communities of devotion: Protestant prayer groups and revival meetings, African-American communities of hope in the midst of desperate circumstances, and other immigrant groups such as Jews, Russians, and Asians. The book is eloquent in its presentation of the St. Jude women as, on the one hand, conspirators in their own oppression, and on the other, constructors for themselves of a new sense of power and agency through prayer as the way of changing their world. To make it a true "gender analysis," however, the participation of male devotees, and the role of the clergy, needs to be brought back into the picture. There are hints as to a different relationship to St. Jude and attitude to prayer in the male adherents, and yet the men remain as shadowy figures. This is, of course, a very welcome reversal of what has been the usual state of religious history, where the women have been the figures kept at the margins of the important tale.

Loretta and those like her are well served by Robert Orsi. Reading this book, she would no doubt be surprised by some things (the comparatively recent origin of the cult, which to her is time-honored), and offended by others (perhaps the betrayal of the fact that the "Father Robert" who answers the letters of the faithful in the St. Jude magazines is really a committee of women); but she would recognize herself and her world of faith. She would find that she, and the profound center of her life in effective, reality-changing prayer, are taken seriously. She would nod, take a couple of puffs on her cigarette, go down to the Shrine, and thank St. Jude.

— JENNIFER M. REECE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CONTRIBUTORS

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